

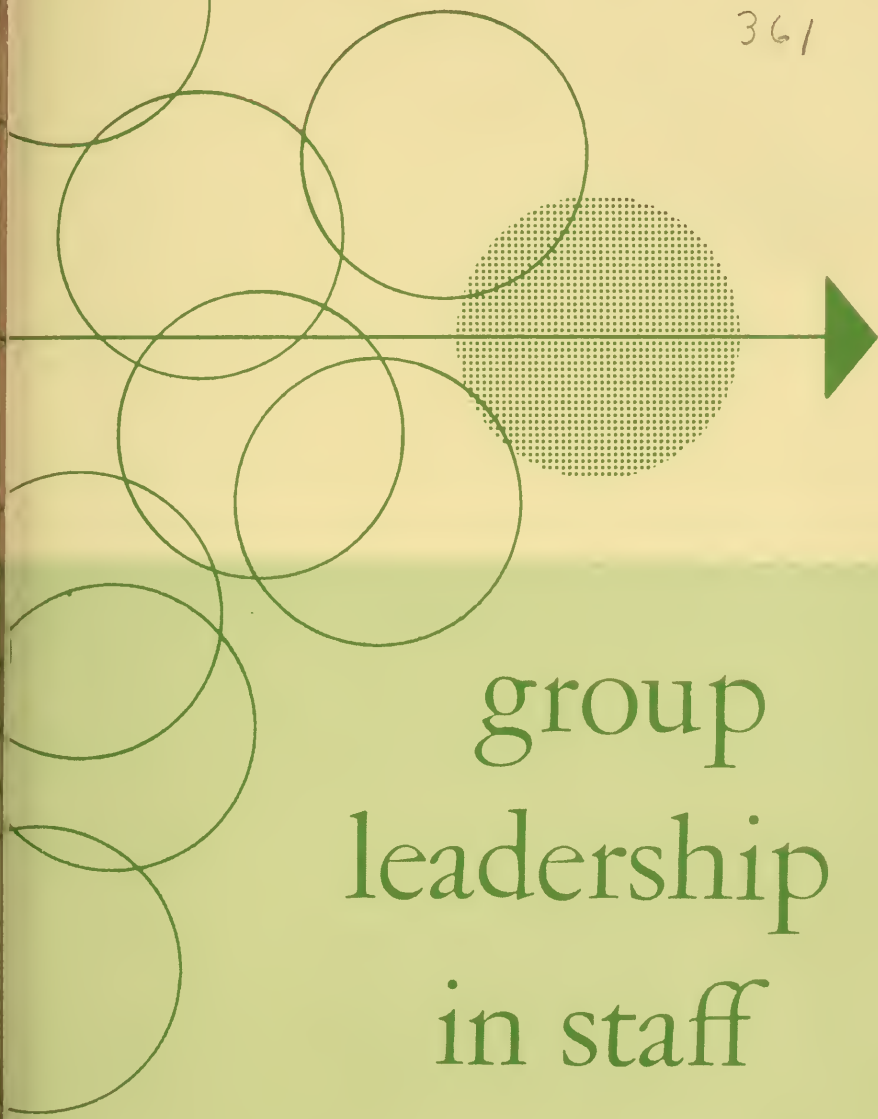
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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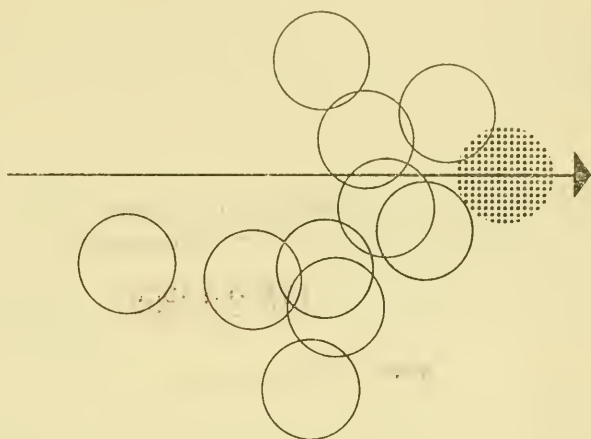
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group
leadership
in staff
training



group leadership in staff training

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FOREWORD



MAN IS BORN into a *group*—the family—and throughout his existence takes part in group living in many forms and for many purposes. In a society founded on democratic ideals, such as ours, the individual and his rights and responsibilities become the central theme of that society. Yet implicit in these ideals is a concern for individuals in relationship to each other—for their way of life *together*, as well as individually.

Because group associations so influence our lives and the lives of people our agencies serve, we need to understand the forces at work when people come together in groups. The helping professions have been slow in recognizing the potential that groups hold for meeting the individual's and society's needs.

Prior to the last two decades, our understanding of how groups functioned was largely a matter of speculation. During the last twenty years, however, the social sciences have moved steadily toward a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the nature of groups and their processes. While these several decades of research and experimentation have resulted in a temporary "confusion of tongues," so to speak, what we know about groups today has been greatly enriched by contributions from the social sciences.

This publication represents an effort to put this new knowledge to use in educational activities conducted as a part of staff development programs in public welfare agencies. Although the content is primarily addressed to social workers, the problems identified and the framework of concepts used for meeting them are concerns common to all professional groups with educational programs.

The specialized knowledge and skills required to carry on such activities productively must be possessed by all leaders of groups. For this reason, this publication offers group leaders valuable guidance in many types of programs and in working toward a variety of objectives.

The administration of child welfare and public assistance programs in public welfare today has inherent in its processes the planning and execution of sound and progressive staff development programs. The nature of the educational responsibility carried by agencies is such as to demand highly skilled teachers whether they are in the line administration or on the training staff of agencies. The use of the group method in staff training is of long standing in public welfare, reaching back as far as the dramatic years of the emergency relief programs. Each succeeding year of these programs under the Social Security Act has seen an increased concern with ways of refining and improving our knowledge and skills in this important task of preparing staff to carry their

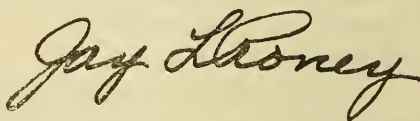
jobs with optimum professional performance, through both individual supervision and group training activities.

In this latter area, our resources for guidance have been less abundant. Providing educational experiences to staff groups encompasses understanding and use of knowledge and methods from two major fields—education with its contribution to learning theory and social science with its conceptual framework of how groups function. Because of the newness of these areas of knowledge to many of us in social work practice and the difficulties inherent in translating these concepts for our particular use, individuals who carry such training responsibilities have had little help in acquiring group teaching skills.

This publication represents a major step toward providing such help. It draws on both education and the social sciences for selected principles which are of special usefulness in agency administration, and more particularly in the training activities which are evolved in response to administrative needs.

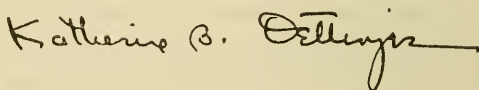
Today, public welfare agencies face a two-fold task. They must continue their efforts to acquire professionally qualified staff for State and local programs and when employed, such staff must be given every inducement for staying with their agencies through opportunities for continued growth and contribution in the positions they fill. At the same time, these agencies must also prepare large numbers of social work personnel who lack professional education in a school of social work to perform complex social service functions as competently and constructively as possible. All of this must be accomplished in large part through well-conceived and soundly executed staff development programs. Possession of educational and group leadership skills on the part of those who carry training responsibilities is a prime essential in the achievement of such program goals.

The two Bureaus have undertaken the publication of *Group Leadership in Staff Training* in the belief that it will provide valuable and practical help to staffs in this important area.



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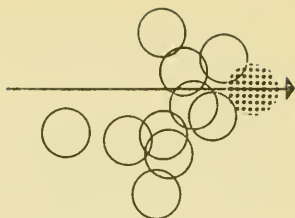


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PROSPECTS FOR GROUP TRAINING

CHARACTERISTICALLY, a healthy and maturing profession constantly seeks new knowledge from the wellsprings of its own practice and from the advances in theory of allied fields. The profession of social work is peculiarly advantaged in this respect. Its own professional purpose brings it close to the growing edges of many other professions and other fields. One of the major problems for social work, however, lies in the lack of communication with these stimulating sources of new growth. Too frequently communication breaks down or is never established.

The subject of this publication, *Group Leadership in Staff Training*, represents an effort to establish communication between social work and two allied fields—education and the social sciences—to the end that their contributions may extend and deepen our knowledge about the teaching and learning problems of social work staffs as they are manifested in group educational situations.

The educational nature of staff development programs in the context of this approach is concerned with the *learning* problems of staff members in groups; with the *teaching* problems experienced by staff assigned to carry responsibility for group leadership; and with the relationship of these problems to each other.

Traditionally, social agencies have carried on their training of staffs through two primary media, individual supervision and educational activity in groups. Here individual supervision is assumed to constitute the core process in the training of social work staff on the job, since integration and progression in learning must take place primarily in relation to its disciplined application and use. That the professional development of staff through group educational methods has purpose and value in its own right is also assumed. These assumptions make mandatory the successful correlation of individual and group educational experiences by the agency.

Three major objectives underlie the development of the material in this publication:

1. To identify the types of group educational problems confronting agencies.
2. To apply certain concepts from the field of education to staff training.

3. To develop selected concepts about groups and group processes for application in educational situations.

The overall goal is to begin formulation of the knowledge and skills essential to the teaching of staffs in groups as a professional guide for those engaged in the conduct of such groups.

Certain problems are inherent in selecting for study one aspect of a field of practice when the field itself has not yet fully developed the basic theoretical underpinning upon which progressive research can be based. To study the group method in agency training programs may seem in some ways like performing surgery before a complete diagnosis of the patient has been made. However, while staff development as a field of professional activity has not yet completed the integration of its experience into a systematic body of knowledge and skills which could serve as the basic framework for its practice, this goal is well on the way to being realized. The problem is one of identification and formulation of concepts rather than lack of content or experience.

Individual agencies, public and voluntary, have over the years acquired an exceedingly rich body of experience in the training of staffs. They have identified basic principles about staff development; have recognized that professional development of staff is an integral part of agency administration; and are in the process of studying and refining training methods and skills. These and other developments provide a sound basis for examination of the use of groups in achieving educational objectives.

The use of the group method in the training of agency staffs is not a new venture. Public welfare programs use it almost universally, and agencies, recognizing that their educational goals must in large measure be achieved through groups, are seeking ways to make group training more effective. This concern is in part a reflection of the accelerated and extensive interest in group life throughout our society today—an interest that has produced a wide range of research about groups in many fields, among them sociology, social psychology, and social anthropology. These developments have in turn influenced the theory and practice of social work, more notably the field of social group work. Though the theoretical formulations of these fields are still in the formative stage of development, they offer increasing enlightenment for those who are concerned with the various forms of group activity in communities and agencies.

This document utilizes the experience of State public assistance and child welfare agencies in the training of agency staffs. The data requested of State agencies in the original study were of two types: First, statistical and descriptive information on the extent and characteristics of groups conducted in State public welfare training programs during the period December 1, 1954 and November 30, 1955; and second, recorded experiences of group leaders with a selected number of group training sessions.

The analysis of the statistical data revealed that the group method in training was not only universally employed by the participating agencies, but that groups were used extensively, involving, over a year's period, large numbers

of staff and considerable blocks of agency time. The descriptive data provided important clues to the kinds of educational difficulties besetting State agencies.

The recorded experiences of group leaders underscored the problems identified in the first part of the data. In addition, they revealed teaching and learning problems pointing to the need for more understanding of educational concepts and group process skills on the part of those responsible for leading training groups. The problems reflected in the analysis of the data determined the aspects of educational theory to be emphasized and the selection of the concepts about group process to be applied.

An understanding of learning as an individual experience is essential to understanding learning as a group experience. For this reason, learning theory and educational methods are drawn on heavily in building an educational framework for agency teaching programs. Within this, the application of selected concepts about group process is made.

The conceptual areas dealing with group process chosen as most pertinent to the needs expressed by training personnel are:

1. The formation of groups, as determined by the principles governing selection of members and definition of goals;
2. Phenomena of interpersonal relations in a group and their influence on the group's functioning;
3. The process of group deliberation carried on through the channels of collective thinking.

The above concepts are developed and related specifically to illustrative material drawn from the agencies. An effort has been made to identify and discuss particular principles, methods, and skills in each of the conceptual areas which might provide a frame of reference for group leaders.

Obviously the present publication cannot provide a controlled test of these concepts in training groups. Both the problems and the concepts would need to be more clearly defined and understood before such refined application could be made. But this treatment of the problems does offer one step in the direction of this clarification.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

STAFF DEVELOPMENT as a concept in public welfare administration has emerged persistently and progressively over a period of several decades. During these years, it has moved from apprenticeship training to its present stature as a professional function considered an integral part of the administration of public social services.

Today, staff development as an agency function is confronted with the herculean task of preparing many thousands of public assistance and child welfare personnel to carry the responsibilities assigned to them under State and local public welfare programs. This undertaking must be accomplished through individual supervision of workers, group training of staffs, and agency provisions for professional education of staff at graduate schools of social work. Training consultants and supervisory staffs in agencies must be given priority in opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills essential to carrying these educational functions.

The Formative Years

In current public welfare practice, the development of staff is an administrative responsibility of the agency, closely interlocked with its philosophy, program, and policies. This responsibility is carried out through an integrated and comprehensive plan for staff growth at all levels of administration and in all positions.

This concept of staff development has been a part of the philosophy of the Division of Technical Training since its creation in the Bureau of Public Assistance in 1936, but was at that time far in advance of general policy and practice in the field. In 1949, it was also incorporated in the Children's Bureau publication on *A State Program for Staff Development in Child Welfare*. While the concept has widespread acceptance today, Federal, State and local public welfare agencies vary widely in its application and, in many instances, administrators do not as yet clearly understand its full implications.

The Bureau of Public Assistance and the Children's Bureau, even in the early period, were convinced that every effort should be made to assist social work staffs in the States to secure professional training, as a basis for staffing agencies with qualified personnel. This conviction led to pioneer action by the Children's Bureau. As one of its first steps under the child welfare services provisions of the new Social Security Act, the Bureau approved a plan whereby at their discretion States could use a portion of the grant-in-aid money allocated to them for child welfare services to grant educational leave stipends for professional education. These opportunities for education were expanded and have continued to the present time as an integral part of staff development planning in child welfare. The Bureau of Public Assistance also recognized this need by providing for the matching of any State funds used for educational leave as an administrative cost on a 50-50 basis.

It was not until 1956 that Federal legislation was passed providing special Federal funds for educational stipends for staffs in public assistance programs. This significant development should go far toward securing professionally qualified social work personnel in State agencies.

The field of staff development in public welfare has gone through several definite stages which have import for an understanding of problems as they exist today. The first of these occurred during the depression years. During this period training programs were hurriedly set up under Federal and State emergency relief programs in order to help large numbers of uninitiated recruits learn how to be "investigators" or "case aides" in mass relief programs. Although this was a time of chaos in many respects, the degree to which beginning standards and goals in the training of staffs for the public social services were inculcated in the minds and practice of those in the programs was phenomenal. The leadership and vision of those who administered Federal emergency relief programs had much to do with establishing a firm set of principles which carried over into the social security programs later.

As the public welfare programs moved from an emergency to a permanent basis and professional objectives were refined, a second era in the training of staffs began. This was the recognition by public welfare agencies that supervision was a key process in enabling staffs to learn and grow on the job. For several reasons, the practice of supervision developed erratically and slowly. For the most part, administration in social work was not yet developed to the point where supervision was seen as an integral function in public agency programs. Nor was supervision itself able at that stage to identify the knowledge and skills required for the fulfillment of the supervisory function in its fullest sense. Later, steady progress was made in realizing the teaching potentials in the supervisory relationship, and increasingly supervisors were asked to carry the major responsibility for orientation of new staff and the continued professional development of all staff. This lodging of the primary teaching responsibility in the supervisory position was an important development in social work as a whole. As public welfare became more stabilized, this concept was incorporated into its own practice.

In the third and current period of staff development, supervision remains

the focal point for contributing to learning on the job, but the horizons of staff development have moved out considerably. The shift in emphasis from "training" as a method to "staff development" as a total concept is significant. Today, staff development is concerned with the total agency, its social philosophy, administration, policy formulations, program development, personnel practices and policies, since all of these affect the definition of job responsibilities and the development of the knowledge and skills required to carry them out. This concept of staff development envisages a philosophy of administration which is creative and permissive and sees the development of staff on the job as a process which permeates the entire agency and is implemented in many related ways.

This broader approach to the development of staff, although conceived early in the growth of public welfare, could not be fully realized until certain other developments had taken place in the field as a whole. With the passage of the Social Security Act, immediate goals had to precede long-range goals. The first major objective of the Social Security Board, the body created to administer the Act, was to help States evolve an administrative definition of jobs and functions; to establish and organize their public welfare departments for the administration of social security programs; and to develop training methods to implement this phase of the program. Training goals in public assistance were obscure in this early period because functions and programs had not yet emerged clearly. However, by 1940 the Bureau of Public Assistance had prepared and released a statement setting forth the basic principles in staff development. These principles have had continuous testing and re-testing over the years and still constitute a valid guide in staff development planning.

What was needed by way of knowledge and skills in the various jobs was difficult to identify in this earlier period and, consequently, the development of professional content as a basic factor in achieving training goals was delayed. Orientation of the thousands of untrained workers who came into the programs at the start had to receive immediate priority and it was here that the first efforts were made to identify what the public assistance worker's job consisted of and to consider what knowledge and skills were required in performing it.

In the child welfare programs this initial phase was somewhat less turbulent, due in part to smaller staffs in the various States, but more particularly to the advances already made in standards in the voluntary child welfare field which could be used as a basis for developing children's services under the Social Security Act. Consequently the problem for public child welfare was not so much one of identifying function and areas of knowledge as one of recruiting qualified people or providing opportunities for new staff to acquire professional education under child welfare funds.

Orientation and supervision in public welfare moved forward rapidly and outstripped the development of training materials dealing with the professional content and skills required to use these methods with optimum results. The lag between training methods and development of the theoretical material essential for their effective use is consistently being overcome. This is made possible not only through the steady evolution of social work theory

but also the developments in allied fields which are now available to social work, more particularly those in the fields of education and the social sciences.

The problems of preparing staff for their responsibilities in public welfare led gradually to State agencies recognizing the need for planned programs of staff development at State and local levels. States in their early attempts to train their staffs, of course, achieved quite uneven results. The way State agencies approached staff development depended on their motivation and resources. Some invested their efforts primarily in orientation programs; others, in strengthening supervision of workers. In general, States grew in their conviction that the professional development of staff required a qualified person on the State staff to plan and carry out a comprehensive and unified plan for staff training. Both public assistance and child welfare programs tried a variety of approaches to the problems of staff training and, as was to be expected in such a new venture, their efforts were often tentative, fragmented, and experimental.

Today public welfare agencies and educational institutions, both graduate schools of social work and undergraduate departments, are developing working relationships which insure mutual exchange and help in the education and training of public welfare staffs. At first, social work education was in large measure dependent upon developments in the new field of public welfare practice for curriculum content in areas of social philosophy, policy, and program in the public social services. For this reason, the development of field work facilities in public welfare settings was understandably slow and did not take place in any extensive way until a later period.¹ Only as education and practice each moved through certain stages of development could the type of collaboration and sharing which exists today come into being.

The Period of Consolidation

By 1943, when the formative years of public welfare were behind, State agencies began to express more interest in the nature of the public welfare job, the quality of work to be expected, and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to do it. At the Federal level, the Bureau of Public Assistance was beginning to work on the important task of developing standards of performance, particularly for the public assistance worker's job. Not only was the clarification of administrative and program direction for the agency as a whole inherent in this process, but of equal importance was the identification and definition of educational or training goals as they related to both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the worker's responsibilities and performance. At the same time, the Children's Bureau was working on defining the requirements for child welfare positions, a process parallel to the determination of the

¹ Statement of Agency Responsibility for Field Work in Public Welfare. Joint Statement Issued by the Children's Bureau and the Bureau of Public Assistance, March 31, 1947.

standard of competence to be expected of staff. The development of such standards of performance is steadily becoming an integral part of agency administration at all levels. But further refinement is essential to make these standards an effective tool in staff development.

The successive amendments to the Social Security Act have been a vital force in the stimulation of training activity in the States. The amendment in 1939 which introduced the merit system principle into public welfare in the States and required them to make provisions for employment of staff on this basis was, of course, tremendously significant in raising personnel standards in public welfare throughout the country. While no major amendments were made to the Act during the period 1940 to 1950, this plateau permitted a settling down process to take place in the vast new programs created by the original act. Since 1950, amendments have been frequent and significant, not only in their social implications, but in the demands they have made on staff. New programs have been added which require new areas of knowledge, old provisions have been extended and liberalized, and an increasing number of programs now require an interdisciplinary approach in carrying out the agency's services. In addition, the maturation of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance program has greatly changed the character of the public assistance caseloads, a change which has had an impact on the nature of the public assistance job. All of these changes have markedly influenced staff development planning and direction.

In this twentieth year of the social security program, Federal and State agencies are still plagued by many problems as they try to achieve both their immediate and long-range goals. Some of these difficulties have a direct bearing on the nature and success of training programs.

The employment of the best qualified personnel for all agency positions, as an essential base for continued development of staff on the job, at times meets with local opposition and at other times is difficult to achieve because of the scarcity of qualified candidates. One of the serious problems confronting public welfare from the beginning has been the vast numbers of staff required to carry out the programs. The supply of people professionally qualified for social work positions has never met the demand. Agencies have had to employ large numbers of staff with no professional social work education, and consequently in their training programs, have had to face an infinitely more complex task than would otherwise be the case.

This shortage of qualified personnel has made it even more important to strengthen administrative and supervisory positions as a first line of defense in helping workers to learn and to perfect their knowledge and skills. Perhaps one of the most dramatic illustrations of this lies in the key position which county directors or heads of local programs and local supervisors hold in the line administration of public welfare throughout the country. This group represents administratively the level of staff most immediately responsible for the implementation and improvement of services at the operating level. And in view of the limited numbers of personnel in local administrative and supervisory positions who are professionally prepared for their responsibilities, a

serious problem is created for those staff under their direction who need professional help and supervision. Administrative and educational retaining walls must be built at this point if the vast number of public welfare workers are to be helped to fulfill their responsibilities to clients.

The Current Picture

What, then, is the general picture of staff development in public welfare today as it relates to the objectives of this study?

For public assistance programs, the latest information available on the numbers of social work staff and their educational qualifications is provided by the U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics study made in 1950. At that time, of the total of 74,240 social workers in all types of social agencies, public and voluntary, only 16 percent had had the full two years of graduate study at a school of social work. An additional 11 percent had had one to two years, 13 percent something less than a year, and 60 percent had had no such study at all. Within this comprehensive survey, the breakdown for public welfare social workers was only partially complete. For public assistance, 30,110 social workers, representing 41 percent of the total, were reported and of this number only 4 percent had completed two years in a graduate school of social work.² An additional 6.8 percent had one year of professional education but less than two years, and 12 percent had less than one year. As might be expected, staff in positions of field representative, consultant, and executive had higher educational qualifications than other groups. For this combined group in public assistance programs, 37.5 percent had two or more years of professional education and 40 percent had one year.

For child welfare programs, figures from a report³ on numbers and education of social work personnel as of June, 1955, show that out of a total of 4,871 child welfare personnel in 49 States and Territories, the caseworker group (3,668) had 19 percent with two years or more of graduate social work education, 26 percent with one year but less than two, 8 percent with less than one year, and 47 percent with no graduate education. As in the public assistance programs, key positions of directors at the State level, supervisors and consultants reflected higher educational qualifications. For the director and director-worker categories (172), 54 percent had two years or more, 12 percent one year but less than two, 8 percent less than one year and 26 percent no graduate work. For the supervisor and consultant groups (1,031), 57 percent were in the first category, 25 percent in the second, 7 percent in the third, and 11 percent in the last.

² American Association of Social Workers: *Social Workers in 1950: A Report on the Study of Salaries and Working Conditions in Social Work Made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics*. New York: American Association of Social Workers, 1952. 78 pp.

³ Seth Low: *Staff in Public Child Welfare Programs, 1956*. Children's Bureau Statistical Series No. 41. Washington, D. C.: Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1957. 34 pp.

These data are staggering in their implications for staff training and professional education and will be referred to again in later chapters.

The increasing number of training consultants in State agencies indicates that agencies are becoming aware of these implications. As of January 1, 1956, of the 60 agencies administering public assistance programs in the States, 33 had positions for full-time staff development consultants, 23 of whom carried responsibility for both public assistance and child welfare programs. The remaining 10 were working entirely with public assistance staffs. In addition, 10 States had staff development consultants assigned entirely to child welfare. Twenty-two agencies had part-time positions with staff development responsibilities. Fourteen of these were for public assistance programs only, and eight for public assistance and child welfare services combined. Only five agencies did not have a staff development position at the State level. These figures represent State positions only and do not take into account training positions at county and city levels of operation.

Major Areas of Need

The conclusion which may be drawn from this picture of staff development programs is obvious. A planned and purposeful approach to staff development, together with the establishment of staff positions to insure this, is becoming an established part of public welfare practice in the States. It is for this reason that it is now possible to assess progress and to identify areas for further study and development.

The one such area with which this publication is specifically concerned relates to particular lacks or gaps in the professional equipment of staff members—administrators, supervisors, and training supervisors or consultants primarily—who carry responsibility for the teaching and development of staff. These lacks represent an educational lag in the field of social work as a whole and are not confined to public welfare agencies alone. Our lack of awareness and understanding of the educational process, its theory and methodology is one example of this lag. This is due in part to differing philosophies in the field of general education and the limited research into learning theory, both of which have postponed advances in the field of adult learning. But despite these limitations, educational psychology and general education have a contribution to make if we can develop ways to adapt their principles and theories for use in both professional social work education and agency staff development programs.

The primary source of enlightenment in regard to educational principles and concepts for use in social work has been, as Charlotte Towle puts it, "the foundation sciences of our own practice." We have drawn heavily on the theoretical base of psychoanalysis for our understanding of the individual learner in the classroom and of the supervisory process in the agency. The discussion of basic learning principles as formulated in Miss Towle's book can be applied to

the learner in his professional development on the job. But this adaptation needs to be pointed up and incorporated into the thinking and practice of agency personnel responsible for training.

The second gap in our professional preparation for the task of teaching agency staffs lies in the area of the knowledge and skills required to carry on the educational process with *groups* of staff. Educators must look to the social sciences primarily for the basic theory on group life, but the field of group work in social work and the field of group psychotherapy in psychiatry also have valuable contributions to make to our understanding of group learning.

These two areas of underdeveloped knowledge and skill—one concerned with educational theory and method and the other with group functioning—constitute the frame of reference for this publication and will appear as strands which run throughout succeeding chapters.



THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN THE AGENCY SETTING

THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, whether in the classroom or on the job, demands that the teacher have knowledge about basic principles of learning and an understanding of the learner himself. In the agency setting, the application of these educational concepts calls, in addition, for an awareness of the elements in the setting itself which bear on educational programs for staff.

Social work has much in its own body of knowledge and experience that can be employed in refining our approach to the learner in the agency. More especially, however, we must turn to the fields of general education and educational psychology to reinforce and extend our knowledge and methodology in the teaching of agency staffs. Contributions from these fields, together with the psychoanalytic orientation of our own profession, provide a sound basis for examining training problems.

Common Problems in Adult Learning

In order to understand the proper usage of the term "educational" as it pertains to agency training programs, we need to take a brief look at some of the historical and current developments in the fields of education, psychoanalysis, and social work.

Traditionally the word "educational" has been associated with the academic setting and the formal approach to learning. Over the years educators and educational psychologists have accumulated a considerable body of knowledge about learning theories and educational methods but its application has generally been limited to elementary and secondary school education. An understanding of how students learn and how teachers can develop their teaching skills most effectively has received relatively little consideration in the development of undergraduate and higher education. Nor has the field of adult education as it has developed in this country been especially concerned with educational theory and its application to adult learning.

Today we find the various sources of knowledge about teaching and learning converging as all educators seek help with their problems. Several of

the fertile areas awaiting the integration and application of existing knowledge are of particular concern to social work education and practice. For one thing, the contributions from the fields of educational psychology and psychoanalysis have not coalesced. Psychoanalytic knowledge as it relates to an understanding of the individual as a learner, for example, has scarcely penetrated the field of general education. And as far as professional education for social work is concerned, we have perhaps had too narrow an approach to learning theory because of our dependence on psychoanalytic contributions.

A second illustration is the limited application of knowledge about teaching and learning to adult educational situations outside the academic setting. Many groups and organizations, professional and business, are engaged in educational activities involving the training of adults. They have a genuine need for more understanding and use of the knowledge and skills concerned with how people learn and how they can be taught most productively in these particular situations.

Finally, the focus in the development of educational theory has been almost exclusively on the individual, even though the usual setting in which an individual learns is a group. The integration of our knowledge about individuals and our knowledge about groups is just beginning to occur.

Within the field of social work practice, the educational nature of the supervisory process and the skills involved in bringing about the professional development of the individual staff member have been emphasized for several decades. For the most part educational "know how" in supervision has been closely identified with our knowledge of human personality and behavior as derived from psychoanalytic thinking, incorporated into social casework practice. For example, the supervisory relationship as developed by social work has been a vital force in bringing about individual growth and change in the learner. Its constructive use has greatly enriched the possibilities for the professional growth and development of staff on the job.

Social work education, as a field of higher education, has also approached the educational process from the theoretical base of psychoanalytic and casework practice with emphasis on the student as an individual learner. Here, too, the teacher-student and field supervisor-student relationship has been recognized as crucial in what and how the student learns.

Learners in Groups

Currently many parts of our society are beginning to be concerned with the importance of groups and group influences. With the help of the social scientists, many educators are beginning to recognize that the teaching and learning processes as carried on in a group situation are influenced by the group itself and by the way it functions. The purposeful blending of theories about individual learning with the rapidly developing body of concepts about group processes represents a much needed forward step in our understanding

of an important dimension in educational activity—learning *in* and *through* the group.

Within the agency setting, the term “educational” has usually represented two types of activity; one carried on as an integral part of individual supervision and the other as part of the more formal training program of the agency, usually implying educational activity in groups. Although theoretically we speak of individual supervision as the core process in the training of staffs and advocate that all other training in the agency flow back and forth into supervision and by so doing become a continuous rather than a fragmented educational process, our experience shows that this objective is difficult to achieve unless pursued vigorously and through clearly defined steps.

Some clarification of what the term “group” implies in the educational sense is particularly important in view of the current emphasis in psychoanalytic literature on the therapeutically oriented approach in groups whose goals are directed toward training or education of the members. This trend seems to assume that the techniques and methods used in group psychotherapy with patients can be transferred to other types of groups where the objectives are concerned not with individual treatment but with learning.

This confusion between therapeutic and educational goals is not new to social workers. In our development as a profession, we went through a period during the 30's when we were uncertain as to whether or not the role of the supervisor in the supervision of the worker was that of a therapist. We finally resolved this issue in our own professional thinking and now distinguish between educational and therapeutic problems and objectives in the supervision of staff and the education of students. Of course this does not mean that psychoanalytic knowledge is of use in therapy but not in education. Obviously it is basic to both but must be employed appropriately in relation to goals.

Unquestionably psychoanalysis contributes much to our understanding of the individual in the learning process. But we might justifiably contend that group psychotherapy and group education present different orientations not only in goal but in the ways in which members move toward a goal. Some thinking in the psychoanalytic field reflects this distinction and, at the same time, points out the constructive use which can be made of selected psychoanalytic concepts about groups in the educational situation.¹

Educational Premises for Learning

We cannot validly explore the educational process as it is carried on in staff groups without giving some consideration to the educational premises which have particular bearing on individual learning.

¹ Alexander Wolf and Emanuel K. Schwartz: The Psychoanalysis of Groups—Implications for Education. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 1955, 1, No. 2, 9–17 (Autumn).

Four primary propositions are involved in establishing a working basis for a study of the processes of group teaching and group learning in the agency setting. These are:

1. Learning on the job is a continuing and progressive educational process arrived at through consciously planned programs.
2. Educational objectives must be in harmony with agency goals, and the planning and arrangement of educational content must be in line with such objectives.
3. Teaching of agency staffs, individually and in groups, requires skill in the generalization of knowledge as a basis for the transfer of learning.
4. Educational activities can be productively carried on only when those who teach have some understanding of the dynamics of individual and group behavior in the learning situation.

PROPOSITION 1: *Learning on the job is a continuing and progressive educational process achieved through consciously planned programs*

This proposition implies a broader base of learning than that taking place within the confines of the job itself. It assumes, first of all, a basic undergraduate education, followed by professional social work education, for the performance of social work duties and responsibilities. Building on this foundation, staff development programs in agencies must sustain and carry forward the educational process of teaching staff to perform the agency's services. Since learning, to be dynamic, must not only be continuous but progressive, the professional development of staff on the job must be accompanied and enriched continuously by opportunities for graduate and post-graduate education, by refresher courses and training activities developed by educational institutions, professional organizations, and other appropriate groups. Learning, in this context, involves the agency, the educational institution, and the individual himself, in the process of improving professional competence. An agency's educational goals, like academic goals, are set within the larger framework of the profession.

Supervision as the core process

The above proposition has implicit within it the assumption that individual supervision is the primary medium through which continuity and progression in learning are realized. But any discussion of supervision as a core process in the training of staff should be prefaced by the frame of reference for supervision dictated by the purposes of this publication. Over a period of years social work literature has reflected the profession's concern about the dichotomy between the administrative and the educational aspects of supervision, although these latter aspects seem to have received greater

weight in the literature.² The inseparability of the administrative and teaching components in supervision and the opportunities inherent in agency administration for teaching of staff have also been stressed in the literature.³

Jeanette Hanford states that an agency has a responsibility, both to its clients and to the community it represents for the totality of its services and for their quality, and that teaching and administration cannot be separated if they are a true expression of that responsibility. This is the point of view held here in the examination of the training function as implemented through the group method. To state this premise more specifically, Miss Hanford's formulation is quoted in full:

Can we agree that an agency has responsibility: (1) for defining its function and operating within a framework appropriate to the needs of the community and the skills and resources of its staff; (2) for creating a setting within which the staff can carry out the agency's services and for helping staff members to function at the optimum level of their abilities; (3) for knowing enough about the work being done (a) to plan program, assess unmet needs, and report to the community and (b) to accept responsibility for the job being done, to assign work, to make the best use of staff skills, and to promote staff members wisely? If these responsibilities are accepted, does it not follow that teaching may be part of the administrative function to be carried out discriminatingly and balanced with other needs which the worker may have, so that functioning may be effective?⁴

Our concern, then, is with developmental supervision within the administrative context of the agency. But even though the supervisory process is the center of the staff member's learning, it cannot be an isolated process, nor the only one. Supervisors in a large, complex agency, or even in smaller ones, can become insulated from the other forms of learning activity to which their supervisees are exposed during the course of a working day. As a core process, supervision is also concerned with what, where, and how staff members learn in their other relationships within the agency, both individual and group; and how this learning can be consciously and productively integrated with what is taught them through individual supervision.

Supervisors who limit their educational observations to the supervisee's responses in supervision may be getting a distorted or at best an incomplete analysis of the individual's learning progress. If the supervisor is to have a well-rounded knowledge and understanding of the staff member's learning

² For illustrations of the educational focus in supervision, see: Lucile N. Austin: Basic Principles of Supervision. *Social Casework*, 1952, 33, 411-419 (December); Yonata Feldman: The Teaching Aspect of Casework Supervision. *Social Casework*, 1950, 31, 156-161 (April). Norma D. Levine: Educational Components of Supervision in a Family Agency. *Social Casework*, 1950, 31, 245-250 (June).

³ For illustrations with emphasis on the administrative component in supervision, see: Sidney Berkowitz: The Administrative Process in Casework Supervision. *Social Casework*, 1952, 33, 419-423 (December); Jeanette Hanford: *Integration of the Teaching and Administrative Aspects of Supervision. Administration, Supervision and Consultation*, Papers from the 1954 Social Welfare Forum National Conference of Social Work: New York: Family Service Association of America, 1954, p. 51-58 (p. 52).

⁴ Hanford, p. 52. See footnote 3 above.

patterns and needs, an awareness of how he relates currently to opportunities for learning in the agency, other than individual supervision, is crucial. The staff member's responses in group situations, such as committees, institutes, or staff meetings can give the supervisor additional diagnostic insight as to where the supervisee is in his professional development; whether, for instance, "he is in a stage of actively reaching out for new knowledge or whether his defenses to learning are high."⁵

Miss Levine elaborates this point further by suggesting criteria to be used to observe a worker in a group learning situation. These criteria relate to the worker's response to new ideas, the quality of his participation and his identification with the purpose of the particular group, and the reaction of others in the group to him. Such responses are directly concerned with how the individual learns in the group and are as significant in the group situation as they are in individual supervision. Therefore, when individual supervision is considered the core process in the training of staffs, the concept of learning as a total, not a partial, experience is incorporated and necessitates the responsibility of the supervisor for observation and understanding of the staff member's development in relation to both his individual and group learning experiences. Such a premise must, in turn, be supported by ways in which the agency's educational activities can be woven into a tapestry of learning for the individual.

Continuity in learning

Continuity and progression in a staff member's learning on the job are difficult to achieve and must be worked at arduously to be maintained. In the full-time graduate school curriculum where the learning process is all of one piece, so to speak, these goals are more visible and attainable. In agency practice, however, learning on the day-by-day job occurs in many pieces and these can be obscured or lost unless purposefully identified and utilized.

Formal training activities conducted by the agency over a period of weeks or months, or held in short blocks of time, can have only a limited impact on extending the individual's knowledge and skill. His consolidation of learning through immediate use is essential for realizing training objectives and is predicated on the constant flow back and forth between individual supervision and all other learning opportunities in the agency.

Dewey describes this attempt at continuity of learning as "the training of thought" and stresses that "the problem of *method* in forming habits of reflective thought is the problem of establishing *conditions* that will arouse and guide *curiosity*: of setting up the *connections* in things experienced that will on later occasions promote the flow of *suggestions*, create problems and purposes that will favor *consecutiveness* in the succession of ideas."⁶

⁵ Levine, p. 248. See footnote, p. 16.

⁶ John Dewey: *How We Think; A Restatement of Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*. New York: D. C. Heath, 1933, x, 301 pp. (p. 56).

PROPOSITION 2: *Educational objectives must be in harmony with agency goals, and the planning and arrangement of educational content must be in line with such objectives*

Training on the job and professional education

Distinctions, as well as bonds, exist between professional development of staff on the job and education of students in the academic setting. These distinctions are important since they determine specifically *what* and *how* the learner shall be taught.

The graduate school of social work is concerned with the preparation and development of the student as a member of a profession. He is the center of an educational activity, designed to help him become a professional person. The agency, on the other hand, engages in educational programs in order to insure the best possible service to its clients through increasing the competence of its staff. But there is an interrelationship and an interdependence between education for the profession and professional development on the job which converge throughout professional practice.

A second major distinction between school and agency educational goals is found in the learner himself. The student enters the professional school with the avowed purpose of seeking an education in order to become a member of a profession. The staff member enters the agency with the avowed purpose of securing employment and usually with little or no recognition, unless he has had professional training, of the educational demands for continued development to be made of him on the job.

The idea has been advanced by some leaders in the profession that when there is recruitment of college graduates directly to public welfare positions, it should be on the basis that the individual is entering a profession rather than merely accepting employment. In line with such a goal, the applicant's motivation toward professional education and the agency's willingness and capacity to provide educational opportunities would be major considerations. While this may be somewhat idealistic in many places in the present stage of public welfare, eventually this goal must be taken seriously by the field.

We sometimes become confused about the relationship of training on the job to professional education in the academic setting because of the realities confronting agencies in the field. Two major areas of confusion occur. First of all, the nature of the public welfare job and the large proportion of social workers in public welfare agencies who do not have professional social work education make it necessary for agencies to decide what knowledge, skills, and attitudes staffs need to have in relation to what the agency sees as its program goals, and to what degree and in what ways these areas can be taught within the agency and which must be reserved for professional education.

Because so few public welfare workers come to their jobs with professional education, the agency finds itself in the position of having to teach some of the same content offered in graduate schools. This situation may lead

to the mistaken conclusion that training conducted in the agency is a substitute for professional education, whereas the way such content is taught and applied in the agency represents quite a different orientation and purpose from that of graduate education.

When the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes of social work are taught agency staffs, it must be with limited goals and the content must be practically oriented for use on the job. The social work curriculum study now in progress in the Council on Social Work Education points up the difficulties in this area for both education and practice:

The school's curriculum is generic, whereas the practice curriculum, through staff development, is specifically geared to the functions to be performed in the particular agency (except in areas of practice where staff development fulfills temporarily an essentially generic educational function).⁷

The statement in parentheses above is the crux of the matter, and the word "temporarily" should be underscored in relation to one of the major educational problems confronting agencies. The approach to this problem should definitely recognize its temporary nature rather than permit it to become a fixed and permanent part of staff development planning.

A second area of confusion, related also in large part to the present shortage of trained personnel, is the danger of viewing agency training as a form of apprenticeship or trade training, rigidly limited to the specific tasks of a particular agency. Such a restricted definition reduces social work practice to rules of thumb rather than permitting the application of social work principles and concepts. When this is true of an agency's training program, the principle of professional development as an integrated, on-going process is negated and a vocational rather than a professional approach to staff training is the result. The major administrative task of agencies today is that of determining their appropriate educational responsibility and avoiding either of the two undesirable extremes of attempting, on the one hand, to simulate professional education in the agency setting and, on the other, of relegating learning to the status of apprenticeship, a step entirely out of keeping with the nature of the work to be done.

Because of the overwhelming educational needs of staff who have not had the advantage of professional education, we are apt to overlook the educational needs of members on the staff who have completed one, two, or more years of graduate social work education. Hopefully we have made some strides since the initial years in public welfare when, as pointed out earlier, a staff member who had secured even partial professional education was given status and responsibility out of all proportion to his capacity to live up to them. Our problem today in relation to staff with professional education lies

⁷ Unpublished manuscript by Werner W. Boehm: Tentative Design for the Study of the Social Work Curriculum, Council on Social Work Education. New York, April 16, 1956, p. 12.

in providing opportunities for them to integrate their new knowledge in a successful casework experience before moving them on to positions of greater responsibility.

The dearth of qualified staff in most agencies makes this a somewhat unrealistic hope, but nevertheless the progressive development of the individual to assume increased responsibility makes for sounder individual practice and ultimately for improved agency services. Equally, if the worker with professional preparation for the job is held to an unimaginative, routine use of his knowledge with little opportunity for an extension of himself professionally, the agency is failing to build on an educational base which, if properly sustained, would greatly enrich and strengthen the agency's services to clients.

The agency also needs to recognize professional education as a *beginning* rather than a *final* stage in the individual's professional growth. Historically some conflict has existed between practice and education in this area. Social work education developed primarily in response to the needs of particular practice settings and built curricula specializations around the agency settings to be served. This was undoubtedly a natural course of events as the profession emerged, but the pressure from the field to produce graduates who could perform the demands of specific settings postponed the day when social work education could begin to educate for professional practice in its broader and more enduring sense.

Now that social work education is moving steadily toward a basic generic curriculum in the master's program, agencies will have to assume a different type of responsibility for the professional development of staff in their initial months and years following graduation, both in relation to specifics of the particular setting and in relation to further integration of theory with practice.

Some administrative factors influencing educational goals

Educational goals are usually evolved at two levels, the level of abstraction and the level of specific planning. Abstract goals are those inherent in the legislation which creates the agency and are delineated further, but still in rather general terms, by the formulation of overall policies to carry out the legislative provisions. At this point goals must then become more specific, must be translated into knowledge and skills to be learned by staffs in order to insure the fulfillment of the agency's broader purposes and functions. In setting up a child welfare division, for example, the law may make it legally responsible for the care and protection of all dependent and neglected children. This is the general goal. But programs and policies, with their accompanying specific training goals for staff, must be developed and executed as an extension of the original legislative purpose.

Educational goals in any agency training program are in large part determined by the framework in which they are developed and they are only as sound and progressive as agency philosophy and administration permit them to be. The general objectives of a public welfare agency are influenced by its philosophy, legal base, agency budget, policies in the employment of staff,

organizational structure, program policies and procedures, and the attitudes of the public. Within its general objectives, the agency's program goals must be developed consistently with the overall administrative goals.

Educational goals must not only be consistent with other agency goals but they are an instrument for the extension and fulfillment of them. The various sets of goals interact upon each other, sometimes positively, sometimes with frustration and calamity. Where an agency has a social goal expressed in the conviction that people on public assistance can be helped to regain their self-respect and, in many instances, their self-dependence, through partial or total rehabilitation, the educational objectives of its training program can reflect a positive, creative pursuit of this goal. On the other hand, where agencies, either by their own administrative initiative or by State legislation, define their purpose as that of routing out the "chiselers" or punishing the "wayward," overall policies will reflect this, too. In such instances, at best, the educational goals of the agency can only serve as psychological support for staff in helping them to implement the law and the administration's policies with a minimum of damage to the recipients of the agency's programs and with the hope that the staff may effect a change for the better in the agency's goals.

While the basic philosophy of the agency primarily determines the educational objectives of its training program, other aspects of agency administration influence agency goals in general and training goals in particular. Primary among these are: What must be known by staff to carry out the defined programs of the agency? What are the demands of the various jobs as outlined in job descriptions? What knowledge and skills are required to carry them out?

Increasingly today public welfare programs call for knowledge in specialized areas. The foundation of agency programs is one of services aimed at the amelioration of financial, physical, social, and psychological problems associated with economic and other special needs of individuals and families. This responsibility, carried in its most direct sense by public assistance and child welfare workers, calls among other things for some degree of knowledge of human behavior, an understanding of the casework relationship, skill in the giving of casework services, and a knowledge of community resources.

Medical care programs have been added to public assistance services in recent years and with them has come a need for staff to have understanding of illness and disability, medical and psychiatric conditions, and the implications of all of these for families and individuals. In child welfare, services in adoption, foster home care and protective problems have been increasingly extended. These and other areas requiring specialized knowledge and skills must determine and guide the educational goals of the agency's training program.

Other administrative realities which influence educational objectives are more familiar to us. They involve such important things as the qualifications established by an agency for its social work positions in casework services, supervision, and administration. The geographical distribution of staff, the

variations in administration of programs in urban and rural areas, the budget available for travel and educational leave, the adequacy and quality of supervision are all important in defining and in achieving educational objectives.

Educational diagnosis sets educational objectives

For a good many years, our approach to the training of staffs has been job-focused. But now we are beginning to see the need to develop a learner-focus, though not to the exclusion of the job to be learned.

Concern for the individual learner means concern with an assessment of his educability. Though "educational diagnosis" is a concept of comparatively recent origin in the field of social work, it has been used effectively in both social work education and practice. The term "educational diagnosis" implies not only an identification of the educational problems and needs of staff but administrative attention to educational plans for meeting them as well.

As a process, educational diagnosis is concerned first with the individual, his capacities, qualifications, potentialities, learning patterns, and other qualities which serve as an index to his professional needs on the job. The individual's capacities, in turn, must be related to the expectations of the agency as expressed in standards of performance for the particular staff assignment and level of operation. The individual's capacity and the agency's expectations are components of the same diagnostic process and both must be taken into account in assessing educational needs.

The learners in the agency setting

Applying the concept of educational diagnosis would seem to be more complex in the field of practice than in the professional school because of the greater number of variables inherent in the employment process in agencies as contrasted with the admission process in schools. For example, in the selection of students certain factors operate which cannot be depended upon to operate in the employment of staff. Charlotte Towle's comment on this is, "The selection process of the admissions evaluation conducted by schools of social work, has within the limits of its lights, ruled out unpromising applicants. The student admitted to a school is therefore assumed to be educable until proved otherwise."⁸

For certain reasons, a parallel assumption cannot be made regarding the employment of public welfare staffs. Since States vary so widely in their educational requirements for employment, the staff within a State program or even within part of a program may show considerable variety in both education and experience. This wide "variety of learners" is an important consideration in assessing individual and group potentialities and needs in learning on the job. With improved personnel practices, undoubtedly some of these variables will disappear. Some States, for example, are now making

⁸ Charlotte Towle: *The Learner in Education for the Professions: As Seen in Education for Social Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954, 432 pp. (p. 137).

effective use of employment interviews to assess personality and attitudes of applicants. Others are using the probationary period to evaluate these important factors. Certainly as selection of staff becomes more effective, the training objectives of agencies will become more readily attainable.

The individual's motivation toward learning also varies among agency staff members. Agencies frequently have staff members whose own concern over their lack of the required knowledge and skill for the performance of their jobs motivates them to seek professional education. Agencies generally have found that the majority of individuals on public welfare staffs, even though not professionally educated, are interested in their jobs and eager for the educational activities provided by the agency. But, unfortunately, the fact that a person seeks and accepts a public welfare job cannot always be equated with a willingness to engage in an educational process directed toward acquiring a maximum efficiency and competency in that job. Within the ranks of public welfare staffs, as elsewhere, are people to whom agency employment represents a job in its narrowest sense, involving their interest and energy at a minimum level. Some staff members also participate in training activities for promotional or prestige reasons rather than because of a sincere interest in improving services to clients by improving their own practice. Some estimate of the individual's motivation toward learning is a basic part of an assessment of his educability and capacity for growth on the job.

The concept of educational diagnosis cannot be applied without considering the educational resources available to the individual staff member and to the staff as a whole. Public welfare agencies, because of their comprehensive national coverage, are often presented with the dilemma of the "have's" and the "have not's" in their programs. Some agencies and communities have a wealth of educational resources available; others a poverty of them. Rural areas particularly are apt to suffer in this regard. Here, geographical distances often curtail the number of educational activities which can be offered within the agency and educational opportunities available from schools of social work often are not accessible. These limitations have more diagnostic significance in relation to groups of staff than in assessing individual needs, but in either instance, they must be considered in setting educational goals.

The qualifications and personal equipment which the individual brings to his job, together with the conditions of employment and the attitude of the agency, constitute the starting point in an educational diagnosis—a process that is ever changing and, consequently, must continually be reassessed as the individual progresses in his learning during his experience with the agency.

Educational diagnosis in public welfare agencies

Public welfare agencies are more familiar with the use of educational diagnosis in individual supervision where knowledge of the staff member's qualifications and day-by-day performance on the job constitute a continuing diagnosis of where and how he needs help. But viewed in broader terms, the use of educational diagnosis in an agency is concerned with knowing who the staff is, what they can do, what services they are expected to carry out,

and in what ways this can best be accomplished. In this sense, the concept of educational diagnosis can be thought of in four dimensions in carrying out a training program:

1. The administrative use of the concept in developing training programs.
2. The use of educational diagnosis as a way of determining individual educational needs.
3. Its application in relation to administratively determined staff groups.
4. Its use within a constituted training group.

Use in administrative planning.—From an overall administrative point of view, an agency should know at any given time what its composite staff development needs are as they relate to its program objectives. Ideally the agency should also be able to project future developments and identify in advance the accompanying demands to be made on staff. This administrative use of educational diagnosis involves looking at the agency and its staff as an administrative whole in an effort to determine the direction and emphasis of training programs.

The public welfare agency has many administrative tools available for this overall examination of the educational needs of staff. Personnel data, job descriptions, standards of performance, individual supervision, evaluations, case reviews, promotional policies, field reports can all contribute to the educational diagnosis of the staff as a whole. Participation of staff in the determination of their own educational needs is, of course, an essential balance wheel in this administrative approach.

A consolidated approach to educational needs based on the use of all these devices may reveal certain lacks on the part of all agency staff, as for example, a lack of understanding of particular policies. In addition, educational requirements of specific staff groups may become apparent, such as the county directors' need for more opportunity to learn the skills of administration; public assistance staff, for more help in understanding what is involved in the determination of eligibility for public assistance; or child welfare workers, in the placement of children in foster homes. Overall planning for staff development calls for translating these administrative findings into an educational diagnosis which in turn leads to an educational program designed to meet both the general and the specific needs of staff.

One State approached an overall diagnosis of its training needs through a Statewide survey, with staff having an opportunity to participate at all administrative levels. A tentative diagnosis of staff needs was made initially at the State level through employment of the administrative resources mentioned above and, in addition, previous staff development activities were evaluated to determine progress and unmet needs.

A questionnaire on suggested subjects for training meetings was then sent to district supervisors who as members of the State staff had participated

in the "tentative diagnosis." The district supervisors met with their county directors who, in turn, brought their own staffs together for discussion of the proposed plan. Each of these groups undertook a self-diagnosis of what they thought their staff development needs were in the light of what the agency was expecting of them. These responses were consolidated on a Statewide basis and a planning conference was set up to test this tentative diagnosis against the needs expressed by staffs at the various administrative levels. A training program was then developed that was consistent with the goals emerging from this analysis. The needs of staff were approached differentially in urban and rural counties because of the differences in the problems confronting each, the number of staff involved, and the organizational structures under which they worked.

As the meetings progressed in the various localities, continuous adjustments and adaptations were made in training plans. Experience with early groups influenced the planning for subsequent groups. These adaptations included such things as better selection of meeting places, grouping of staff with similar agency experience, different methods of securing staff participation, or determining whether group training meetings or field consultation would be more productive for a particular area. The experience of this State illustrates how the concept of educational diagnosis can be applied to the broader, but not less important, aspect of determining educational needs and goals and how these can be met by a variety of educational programs.

At the planning level, the agency's educational objectives must be sufficiently fluid to move with the agency as it develops and changes; they must also be diagnostically determined by where the staff is and how far and fast it can move. This involves the assessment of what needs to be taught, what attitudes are to be influenced and through what media this can best be accomplished.

Application to the individual learners.—An educational diagnosis of an individual staff member is carried out primarily through the supervisory process, although knowledge and understanding gleaned in this way must also be made available for use in determining the membership and content of training activities conducted through groups. In addition to the administrative tools mentioned previously, the supervisor is at a vantage point in seeing the learner in a laboratory situation, as it were. If he understands what is involved in the learning process, the supervisor, at any level of responsibility, is in a better position than anyone else to determine diagnostically what the individual educational needs are among his supervisees. The supervisor will recognize that certain of these needs can best be met through the one-to-one teaching relationship in individual supervision. From what he knows about his supervisees as individual learners and their characteristics as a staff unit, he can identify educational problems which might respond better to treatment if dealt with in a group learning situation.

The areas of individual educational need which involve a diagnostic approach are many and varied, but certain identifiable areas have more

pertinence than others. These might be grouped as those relating to the knowledge and skills to be learned by staffs; those concerned with the learning habits and patterns of the individual; and those concerned with the personality of the individual learner.

The first area, namely what is to be learned, is the most tangible of the three, but often this is taken for granted and thus becomes a static rather than a dynamic element in staff learning. The educational "what" in social agencies is usually derived from two sources—the actual subject matter dealing with specific aspects of the agency's program and the individual's job; and the professional skills and attitudes identified as essential to carrying out particular job functions.

Appraisal of the individual supervisee's grasp of these two sources serves as the base for determining what educational needs exist and gives some clue as to how they should be met. If all supervisees in a staff unit appear to lack certain knowledge or to have difficulty in the same area of skill, the problem may lie with the supervisor as a teacher rather than with the learners themselves. Or perhaps a diagnostic approach to the staff as a unit as well as individually would show educational gaps that by their nature could be met more successfully through group rather than individual teaching.

The second area of educational need relates to individual learning habits and patterns. Adult learners have well-established patterns of learning by the time they enter employment. In part, these patterns are the product of particular eras in learning psychology to which individuals were exposed in their earlier years. And in part they are the products of the intellectual and emotional experiences of the individual during his lifetime.

Individual learning habits and patterns, whatever their origin, must be identified and understood. For this to occur, those in a teaching role in an agency must have an educational frame of reference within which to judge individual learning. In this connection, Bernard's identification of four steps in what he calls "creative thinking" is of interest: (1) preparation, (2) incubation, (3) illumination, and (4) verification.⁹ Conceivably these various steps might provide a basis on which understanding of the individual learning patterns and their differences could be attempted.

In this context, *preparation* is related to the concern the individual feels for the task he has to do. Is he motivated positively toward it? How does he go about undertaking it? Is his approach to the objective purposeful and organized? Is he able to absorb the information or knowledge presented to him in the course of his learning? To the agency supervisor, these points may sound familiar since undoubtedly they are a part of every staff evaluation process. But, too often, in our practice we have developed only one facet of this process. We have more or less adequately isolated the items of performance to be evaluated in relation to the individual staff member, but we have not pursued very far the relationship of such evaluation to *how* the individual

⁹ Harold W. Bernard: *Psychology of Learning and Teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954, 436 pp. (p. 162-165).

learns, which is really the crux of the matter, educationally speaking, and involves us in an understanding of the contributions of ego psychology to learning.

Incubation explains what takes place in the next phase of the thinking process. Bernard describes it as the period when the individual releases himself from the pressure of fact gathering and studying and waits for ideas to mature. In this process, Bernard includes time for the assimilation of ideas into the thought processes of the individual, for the rearrangement of information—e.g. placing different aspects of a problem in various sequences and contingencies—and for various centrally important ideas to rise and for others to recede to positions of relative significance. We can readily recognize this process as taking place constantly in every aspect of social work learning, provided of course we allow *time* for it to happen.

For adult learners, the “incubation period” will reflect their customary ways of thinking through a problem. Our frequent use of such expressions as “mull it over,” “let it simmer,” or “take a calculated risk” describes in lay terms some of the patterns which individuals use in their efforts to sort out and rearrange their ideas in relation to a problem. In this process, the individual usually focuses on the problem rather than on any conscious recognition of the mental processes he is going through to solve it. But to the person observing the learner and responsible for teaching him, the learning mechanisms employed by him are important clues to how and when he needs educational help.

As part of this second phase, Bernard describes the familiar “plateau” of learning and the importance of recognizing when an individual has reached this point in a particular area of his learning. This is a time when a period for the incubation of ideas can be profitable.

Illumination, as Bernard points out, is the period in the learning process at which a clearer conception of the problem is reached. Individuals vary a great deal as to when this occurs, but one thing is certain, the steps of preparation and incubation come first. We have all had the experience personally and in the teaching of others of “the light suddenly dawning” in relation to some problem of learning. As every supervisor knows, this illumination can take place not only in relation to learning something predominately factual in nature, but also in the emotional area, where as the result of a learning experience, the individual becomes aware of his own emotional reactions as they affect the problem he is working on. Illumination is perhaps the most rewarding step in learning, both to the learner and to the teacher. For the teacher, the problem lies in recognizing individual differences in this area, and in attuning his help to these variations in learning patterns.

Verification is the individual’s way of preserving what he has learned for future use. It is the translation of knowledge into generalizations, a skill which the individual achieves with the aid of those responsible for his

learning. The solution of one problem should enable an individual to extend this learning to other situations. Bernard emphasizes two points in the transfer of learning, namely that the similarity of the learning situations *must be perceived by the learner* and that, if the learner is expected to apply his learning in other situations, the person responsible for his teaching *must teach in such a way that a transfer of knowledge is possible*. Both of these criteria have implications for those in supervisory and training positions.

The third area to consider in the individual application of the concept of educational diagnosis is the personality of the learner. The use of the term "personality" does not imply that the person in the teaching role knows the life history of the learner. In this connection, Charlotte Towle makes clear that the educator's understanding of the learner is based on observations of his responses in the educational process. These responses become significant to the educator, and at times to the student, in the light of his knowledge of ego development and the purposes which adaptive and defensive behavior serve in the particular educational situations.¹⁰ The ego serves an adaptive and integrating function in personality development and expression, and in this connection greatly influences the individual's learning processes. The ego represents the innate, acquired and cultivated qualities through which the individual adapts himself to the outside world. Through the ego, the individual learns to protect himself from the disintegrating forces of fear and anxiety and to "learn from experience." In the educable student, Towle continues, the "normal protective responses" operate in the interest of integration and execution of knowledge as differentiated from defenses which may impede learning.¹¹

Those engaged in teaching, whether in the classroom or in the agency, must be aware of some of these basic concepts of personality formation and functioning as they affect learning. But the use of this knowledge is focused on providing educational help and does not extend to the area of therapeutic help. These two types of help represent distinctly different goals and consequently call for a different application of these basic concepts.

Application to groups of staff.—Educational diagnosis when applied to groups rather than individuals calls for a differential approach to the formation of groups. In planning institutes or workshops, in many States, several county staffs are brought together to constitute a training group, usually with geographical convenience and low travel costs determining the constituency of the groups. Since we are concerned here with what is educationally profitable and sound, rather than what is expedient, we need to look at the implications of such heterogeneous groupings for learning. Even within such administrative restrictions, however, oftentimes alternate ways of planning training groups can be used which are more in keeping with the agency's educational objectives. This calls for a skilled use of educational diagnosis to determine what groups could be combined and for what purposes.

¹⁰ Towle, p. 55. See footnote, p. 22.

¹¹ Towle, p. 62-63. See footnote, p. 22.

Groups themselves will sometimes, consciously or unconsciously, make a self-diagnosis of where they are in relation to other groups in the agency, sometimes even when those responsible for planning training are not aware of these differences. In one such instance, a State was planning a series of meetings with county staffs in order to strengthen casework services to aid-to-dependent children families. Through administrative error, County A was not included in the geographical grouping of counties usually brought together for such meetings. Later when staff members in County A were given an opportunity to attend an institute planned for another group of counties, they demurred, saying they would prefer to have an institute of their own. This county had a small staff, six or seven in number, and meeting with them separately required a heavy investment of the field representative's and the training supervisor's time. Both were surprised to discover in meeting with the staff that their level of understanding of the program and the quality of their performance was such that in reality what they needed was private tutoring for a period of time. Their educational needs could be more adequately met, for the time being at least, in an atmosphere where they did not compete with staffs whose progress had been more rapid.

Another situation seemingly the same on the surface might require an entirely different type of handling. In some instances, a county requesting a training group for its staff alone might prove to be isolated and ingrown, and might need the stimulation and example of more progressive counties.

Staff groups who work closely together over a period of time often take on a group culture, characteristic of their particular agency setting. This influences their way of thinking and doing and their self-image as a group. One training supervisor in describing such a group said "there appeared to be a tendency for district office staff groups to stay close to each other and in some instances to present the same ideas and concepts."

The data submitted by the various States for use in the original study point up the importance of a careful educational diagnosis of staff units as a basis for deciding whether they should be combined to form training groups. Not infrequently in public welfare agencies, membership of a training activity must be decided on the basis of what "groups" (administrative units such as county staffs, for example) rather than what individuals should make up a group. This situation can create a variety of problems which, as we shall see later, can affect the group educational process.

Application within the group.—In this use of the concept, educational diagnosis is no longer related to selection of the individual participants or staff units in forming educational groups, but to the educational needs *within* an established group, not only at the beginning but throughout the life of the group. The group leader has a certain amount of knowledge about the group in advance—he knows who is in the group, its purpose, and the body of content which is to be the basis for discussion. He may even know some of the learning patterns or problems of individuals through his daily relation-

ship with them on the job. All of these diagnostic materials are a part of his approach to the group, but they are only the beginning of what Bertha Reynolds calls a "running diagnosis" of the group's needs and responses as they shift and change during the course of the group's learning experience.

Not only what the group needs to know but how they seem to learn best is a part of the diagnostic observation of the agency teacher or leader. What he gleans from such observation may cause him to rearrange the content, change the direction of his teaching goals, accelerate or slow down his pace, or make other revisions in his planning as the group moves along through the sessions of the training activity. In this connection, Miss Reynolds points out that both learning and teaching are two-way processes; that the needs of the group should be related "to the teacher's body of knowledge (theory and experience) and the formulation of an educational program (a prescription, if you will) for this particular group."¹² As companion to this, the teacher relates his comments and questions to what the group seems to need to know most. "This diagnosis of the educational needs of the group governs the choice of what to pick out of what is said, for further elaboration and discussion."¹³

The leader who is content-focused rather than learner-focused and who feels compelled to teach what he came to teach will be insensitive to what the group is telling him about its needs and ways of learning. One training supervisor, in leading a workshop on supervision where members were presenting material from their own experience, observed that "this group let me know early in our sessions that they worked best when they could get into things quickly, going from the specific to the general." By being alert to the thinking processes of the group as they worked on a piece of material, the leader was able to make this diagnostic observation. Yet at the same time, she was able to hold to her goal of helping the group to see the principles to be learned from discussion of the specific situations which they could apply as they worked on other cases.

In summary then, the potentialities for use of educational diagnosis in the agency are extremely rich and valuable. It is particularly useful in public welfare settings because of the "variety of learners" for whom educational planning must be done and the necessity for organizing educational experiences to meet a diversity of individual and group training needs.

Practice curriculum-making in agency training programs

The limited communication between social work and the field of general education has until recently deprived social work of benefits which could advance its education and practice. One very important area, for example, is the application of learning theory to the building of curricula in the schools.

¹² Bertha Capen Reynolds: *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942, viii, 390 pp. (p. 120).

¹³ Reynolds, p. 312. See footnote 12 above.

Elementary and secondary education have made advances in this area and the experience in these fields is finding its way into higher education.

In social work education, interest and action in curricula revision and change have accelerated a great deal and many of the principles and concepts emerging from this activity can be applied to the development of educational programs in agencies as well. As the principles of curriculum-making are applied more particularly to field work as an integral part of the professional curriculum, agencies will be able to experience at first hand the potentialities in these developments for staff training. One of our greatest problems in the planning of training programs has been our fragmented approach to the development of training activities. In part this is due to the fact that we have tended to concentrate on the activity rather than on the educational process involved.

Basically, what is it we are trying to do in staff development programs? We are trying through an educational process to change the behavior patterns and attitudes of staff, as well as to provide them with knowledge about their specific job responsibilities. As we know from learning theory, the educational experience always demands change in the individual under any circumstances. If we study the implications of this statement, we realize the importance of developing skilled ways of arriving at what educational changes are necessary and how best these changes can be brought about.

An important companion device to educational diagnosis is that of curriculum-making, the structure through which educational needs are translated into objectives, content and methods. Ralph W. Tyler's *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*¹⁴ provides valuable guidance in this area. Although Dr. Tyler's material was prepared for graduate students in education at the University of Chicago and deals with curriculum building in general education, his integrated use of learning theory and his keen understanding of the organization of learning experiences make this syllabus a source of help to everyone concerned with the planning of educational programs. The discussion here draws heavily on Tyler's material and attempts to adapt it to agency training programs.

Tyler raises four fundamental questions which he contends must be answered in developing any curriculum and plan of instruction:

1. What educational purposes should the school (agency) seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

In all four areas, those of us concerned with staff training have some distance to go in realizing the goals implied in Tyler's statement.

¹⁴ Ralph W. Tyler: *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950, 83 pp. (p. 1-2).

Conception of Goals.—Tyler stresses the importance of a clear conception of goals in any educational program and points out that the educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content outlined, instructional purposes developed, and the results of learning measured. He speaks of studying the learners themselves as a source of educational objectives. This is closely related to the concept of educational diagnosis since it calls for knowing the learner and his individual needs as a basis for educational planning. But Tyler carries this a step further when he states that “studies of the learner suggest educational objectives only when the information about the learner is compared with some desirable standards, some conception of acceptable norms, so that the difference between the present condition of the learner and the acceptable norm can be identified. This difference or gap is what is generally referred to as a need.” In an agency, the acceptable norm might well be the standards of performance formulated by the staff and the agency as representing what is expected of individuals in their respective positions. Such a statement of norms is essential in the development of staff if any accurate gauge of educational needs or movement toward meeting these needs is to be attained.

Screening Objectives.—Tyler suggests some ways in which educational objectives may be screened as a method of insuring good selection. One important requirement in relation to educational objectives is the selection of those which are of greatest value to the particular program and can be achieved within reasonable limits. The social philosophy to which the agency is committed would constitute the first screen. Within this, those objectives “that stand high in terms of values stated or implied”¹⁵ would need to be identified. For example, public welfare agencies place a high value on the goal of guaranteeing the rights of individuals as spelled out in the processes of the application, investigation, and administration of public assistance and child welfare. If this is accepted as a basic philosophy, it should be incorporated in the educational objectives of the agency. The selection and organization of learning experiences required to insure that staff understand, accept, and live by this goal require a continuous screening of objectives in the progression of educational activities.

A second criterion suggested by Tyler in this connection draws on the psychology of learning in determining objectives. “Educational objectives are educational ends, they are the results to be achieved from learning. Unless these ends are in conformity with conditions intrinsic in learning, they are worthless as educational goals.”¹⁶ The psychology of learning provides several guideposts for the selection of educational objectives. It enables us to “distinguish goals that are feasible from those that are likely to take a very long time or are impossible of achievement at the time.”¹⁷ Two learning principles

¹⁵ Tyler, p. 22. See footnote, p. 31.

¹⁶ Tyler, p. 24. See footnote, p. 31.

¹⁷ Tyler, p. 24. See footnote, p. 31.

in particular apply in the determination of objectives: (1) In general, the forgetting of knowledge learned is very rapid and (2) most learning experiences produce multiple outcomes.

As applied in staff training, the first principle should increase our concern as to how closely learning is tied in with application, since opportunity to use knowledge is a potent factor in reducing forgetting. The educational objectives must include opportunity for the use of new knowledge in a continuous and integrated way, whether learning takes place through individual supervision or in a group situation.

The second principle, that of multiple outcomes, bespeaks learning dividends of which we are seldom conscious or at least rarely use consciously in the development of educational objectives. By "multiple outcomes" Tyler refers to the secondary benefits accompanying learning around a particular point or subject. This "attendant learning" may be just as important as the primary educational goals but it is considered as secondary because it is not a required part of the goal. An institute or professional staff meeting planned on the subject of budgeting in a public assistance agency might be used to illustrate this point. The educational objectives ordinarily thought of in this connection are (1) to help staffs understand the meaning of economic security to people and the emotional significance attached to money as a part of that security and (2) to give information about the agency's policies and procedures on budgeting and to develop the technical knowledge necessary to compute and execute a budget.

If these objectives are really accomplished and staff members have an opportunity to apply this knowledge, their learning will extend beyond these objectives. As a result of their application of this knowledge to many cases, they will get some idea of the deprivations under which public assistance clients as a considerable group of American society are expected to live. This may become the basis of a social philosophy for the individual. Through this knowledge also, a staff member may become aware of how adequately or inadequately his agency is able to meet the needs of clients and from this develop a new sense of citizen and community responsibility.

Tyler summarizes this principle by saying, "Learnings which are consistent with each other, which are in that sense integrated and coherent, reinforce each other; learnings which are compartmentalized or are inconsistent with each other require greater time and may actually interfere with each other in learning."¹⁸ In our development of educational goals and content, we might profit a great deal by a more conscious development and use of "attendant learning."

Formulation of objectives.—In his discussion of the formulation of objectives, Tyler deals with a principle which is extremely important in the development of agency educational objectives and training programs. This

¹⁸ Tyler, p. 27. See footnote, p. 31.

relates to the way we conceive of objectives, the actual form in which we formulate them. It is of primary importance, Tyler points out, that educational objectives be stated in a form which will facilitate the selection of learning experiences and serve as a guide in teaching.

Tyler describes the most useful form for stating objectives as that of expressing them in terms "which identify both the kind of behavior to be developed in the student and the content or area of life in which this behavior is to operate."¹⁹ Testing this out in an imaginary training situation, we might arrive at "to develop skill in the administrative aspects of the case supervisor's job," "to increase the placement skills of caseworkers in the use of foster homes," or "to develop understanding by public assistance workers of the concept of 'self determination.'" To increase competence, to develop understanding, etc., implies a kind of behavior on the part of the learner but also calls for a more specific definition of the degree and kind of behavior in the minds of the teaching persons. This is necessary in order to lay the basis for the selection of the learning experiences best suited to bringing about change in the learner. Tyler concludes this discussion of how objectives are worked out with this important statement: "It can be safely concluded that a statement of objectives clear enough to be used in guiding the selection of learning experiences in planning instruction will indicate both the kind of behavior to be developed in the student and the area of content or of life in which this behavior is to be applied."²⁰

Unfortunately in staff training we often do not state objectives in this way. Sometimes our objectives are stated as things which as teachers we plan to do, as for example, "to present new policy on medical care" or "to discuss principles of interviewing." These statements may indicate what the training leader plans to do but they are not really statements of educational ends, according to Tyler's conception. He points out, "since the real purpose of education is not to have the instructor perform certain activities but to bring about significant changes in the students' patterns of behavior, it becomes important to recognize that any statement of objectives should be a statement of the changes to take place in the students. Given such a statement, it is then possible to infer the kinds of activities which the instructor might carry on in an effort to attain the objectives—that is, in an effort to bring about the desired change in the student."²¹

A second form in which we often describe our objectives in staff training is merely stating a subject, concept, or other generalized description of content which a group is to study in a training session, as for instance, "the application process," "case recording," or "the supervisor's job." Although these subjects indicate the content to be dealt with generally, they are not satisfactory as educational objectives because they do not specify what staff members are expected to do with these elements.²² Such generalized topics,

¹⁹ Tyler, p. 30. See footnote, p. 31.

²⁰ Tyler, p. 30. See footnote, p. 31.

²¹ Tyler, p. 28. See footnote, p. 31.

²² Tyler, p. 29. See footnote, p. 31.

unless accompanied by more specific goals for the learner, can result in uncertainty on the part of the staff member as to what is expected of him.

A third way in which our objectives are sometimes stated is in the form of generalized patterns of behavior, such as, "to develop positive social attitudes" or "to understand human behavior." Such generalized statements are not adequate as objectives since they do not indicate specifically the areas of the job to which this behavior applies. This would mean, in Tyler's terms, including in the objectives the nature of the content or the kinds of problems in which the "social attitudes" or the "understanding" are to be developed.²³

Tyler's framework for the selection of learning experiences in planning instruction provides an extremely useful guide for agency personnel who carry a teaching responsibility. We have been familiar with objectives related to the "area of content" in this regard but we have done less with Tyler's second dimension—that of identifying the kind of behavior to be developed in the learner in relation to what he is being taught.

PROPOSITION 3: Skill in generalization as the basis for the transfer of learning

Individual supervisors and group leaders often experience the problem of not knowing to what degree teaching should be focused on a specific case situation. Frequently they are confronted with pressure from staff members who, out of their own anxiety, want specific answers or formulae to be applied to individual cases. Here, the teaching-learning problem involved is to identify what needs to be taught specifically in relation to an individual case and what should be taught in "terms of the learner's perceiving general principles that he might use, or developing a general attitude towards the situation or method of attack which he could utilize in meeting new situations."²⁴ The concept of teaching through "the development of generalized modes of attack upon problems, generalized modes of reaction to generalized types of situations" represents a theory of learning that must be understood by those who seek to develop this skill.

Generalization in the educational process

To understand the nature of our problem in using the process of generalization in the training of agency staffs, we need to look briefly at what our traditional pattern of teaching has been in social work. Both in social work education and practice, casework has built its professional base on the use of the case method—the study of the individual or family. Our use of the

²³ Tyler, p. 29. See footnote, p. 31.

²⁴ Tyler, p. 27–28. See footnote, p. 31.

individual case in teaching has given us a realistic and dynamic application of the educational principle that knowledge is for use and can best be retained and integrated through use. In general, however, the profession of social work, for various reasons, has been slow to move on to generalizations based on its knowledge of individual case situations and in this way build a body of social work theory. Our case-focused tradition has kept us in educational blinders and has often limited us to the specifics of the individual case in supervision, staff training, or professional education. Charlotte Towle describes the traditional development of the casework sequence in social work education as "structured like a string of beads, one aspect of learning after another," and social casework teaching as emphasizing the uniqueness of each case situation and intrenching an attitude of not daring to generalize.²⁵ This has been even more characteristic of our educational focus in agencies than it has been of social work education.

These traditional patterns are under critical scrutiny today. Social work education is moving rapidly toward an integrated as opposed to a segmented approach to education. All of this presupposes the development of particular teaching skills, primary among which is knowing how to teach "the parts in relation to the whole," how to analyze through breaking "a situation into its parts, but also how to synthesize, build it up again toward the solving of a problem."²⁶

Although the principles of generalization in education can be applied in the agency as well as in the educational institution, to be useful they must be adapted to the nature and objectives of agency practice. From whatever point we start in the educational process, we find ourselves concerned with the central theme of educational objectives. They determine what we teach and how we teach it. If we are agreed that effective learning does not result from teaching case-by-case in isolation, then how can we achieve it? In the agency setting, effective learning means adapting Tyler's basic rules to the building of a body of social work content and selecting our methods of teaching in conformity with the behavior we want to induce in the performance of job responsibilities.

One of the most useful educational methods in achieving effective learning is that of teaching from the individual case or group of cases certain general principles which can be applied in the solution of other individual situations. Why is such an objective worthwhile in any agency situation? When staff have been taught in such a way that their acquired knowledge becomes integrated for continued use, the following dividends accrue to the agency and to individual professional growth: (1) more professional energy can be given to sustained work on cases as contrasted with scattered, unrelated effort; (2) a more enriched service can be made available to clients based on a deeper understanding of their problems; (3) greater economy in supervisory effort can come through more selective use of supervision; (4) an increasing

²⁵ Towle, p. 282. See footnote, p. 22.

²⁶ Towle, p. 339. See footnote, p. 22.

degree of learning is transferred to new areas of the job; (5) greater productivity occurs with more qualitative results.

Teaching the body of social work content and skills consistent with the demands of the agency imposes on the supervisory and training staffs a teaching responsibility which should be examined thoughtfully. Knowledge of behavior and relationships, the core content in social work practice, cannot be prescribed in capsule form to be swallowed by the worker case-by-case. Rather, teaching in these areas should enable the worker to draw on his own progressively cumulative store of information and understanding through the transfer of his learning in a differential way to many situations.

The realities of the public welfare agency situation must, of course, be taken into account in attempting to develop the skilled type of teaching implied here. The general educational level of the learner group, more particularly those in casework positions, presents some limitations. Comparatively few staff in this group have gone beyond college graduation. Therefore much of the knowledge they must acquire is in the areas of understanding human behavior, the worker-client relationship, working on social and emotional problems, etc., areas which agencies could assume workers would know, at least to a beginning degree, if they came to the agency as graduates of schools of social work. The teacher's skill in generalizing knowledge and the individual learner's capacity for integration of knowledge are both greatly influenced by the educational background which each brings to the task. Educational goals cannot be set beyond the ability of teacher and learner to reach them.

Many supervisors in public welfare who are expected to carry a teaching responsibility are not educationally equipped to do so. They have not acquired professional education in social work, nor have they had the advantage as caseworkers of being under skilled supervision during their own learning experiences. When promoted to supervisory positions, such supervisors work under the double handicap of trying to acquire not only supervisory and teaching skills but also a firmer grasp on the casework content which they are expected to teach.

The agency must select from the body of available knowledge what is appropriate to its goals. But the agency cannot build a learning situation in the complete sense of the term, nor can it rely on built-in areas of knowledge which exist in the school to lend support to the practice courses. True, agencies can and do call on schools of social work to provide opportunities for securing this supporting knowledge and for help in the improvement of practice skills. When this is done, the agency faces the task of determining in advance the objectives of such training and planning for the integration of it with the day-by-day work of the staff who attend.

Nor can the agency achieve as orderly and progressive an approach to learning as the school. Certain administrative decisions must be made about cases, one by one, even though at the same time they are used in a consolidated way as a base for teaching the principles which emerge from them. For the individual worker, the daily pressure of agency work may

limit the degree to which his learning can be a continuous and progressive experience. Many an opportunity to teach or to learn may escape notice during a crowded day. What is important, though, is that the agency develop an awareness of the principles involved in the transfer of learning and build on learning experiences in staff development in such a way as to bring about maximum application of the knowledge and skills acquired.

Dewey provides us with substantial guidance in understanding the process which goes on in the generalization of knowledge. He states, "An idea, after it has been used as a guide to observation and action, may be confirmed and so acquire an accepted status on its own behalf. Afterwards it is employed, not tentatively and conditionally, but with assurance as an instrumentality of understanding and explaining things that are still uncertain and perplexing. These established meanings, taken to be secure and warranted, are *conceptions*. They are means of judgment because they are standards of reference."²⁷

Dewey goes on to say that concepts enable us to generalize and to extend and carry over our understanding from one situation to another. They serve to standardize our knowledge, help us to identify the unknown and supplement what is already present in our knowledge. In relation to the educational significance of concepts, Dewey stresses that "at *every* stage of development, each lesson, in order to be educative, should lead up to a certain amount of conceptualization of impressions and ideas. Without it, nothing can be gained to carry over to better understanding of new experiences." It is the "intellectual deposit" that counts, educationally speaking.

Dewey warns us against educational mistakes which result when concepts are not utilized by the teaching person intelligently and understandingly. One pitfall lies in formulating or selecting concepts which are so remote from the understanding and experience of the learners as to be confusing and artificial. A second error is that of presenting concepts "ready made" so that the learner is left with only "verbal formulae," whereas the internalization of the use of the concepts can be arrived at only through observing "the conditions that are essential to the formulation of concepts."

Both of these warnings, as well as Dewey's positive guides in relation to teaching generalizations, are extremely pertinent to teaching situations in agencies.

Use of case material

Selection of cases for teaching is in itself a skillful process, and while the agency, unlike the school, must teach from all its cases in a sense, certain case situations will lend themselves better than others to specific educational goals in the training of staff.

The selection and use of cases in staff training are inextricably tied in with the principles of educational diagnosis, educational objectives, and

²⁷ Dewey, p. 149-155. See footnote, p. 17.

practice curriculum-making. Our primary goal should be to select and use cases within this framework.

Traditionally our pattern has been to study a case in detail, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph so that invariably the focus has been on what the worker did or did not do in relation to the problem. In individual supervision, such an approach may be necessary at times, but when cases are used in group teaching, the purpose is not to study the skill or lack of it on the part of the worker who carried the case, but to help the group members apply the principles learned from their discussion of a specific case to their own individual situations. This use of case material implies not piece by piece consideration but consideration by conceptual areas, as for example, parent-child relationships, worker-client relationships, the meaning of money, etc., with the focus remaining on the principles to be taught.

Local color is often a factor in selecting cases. Frequently staffs will insist that material used must come from their own agency settings. In fact, State agencies reported that in practically every group the case material utilized for teaching came from the practice of the participating members.

As one supervisor reported in her write-up of such a group, the members resisted her use of cases from another State because, they said, "our State is different." It is important to look at what is involved educationally in this point of view. First of all, such a stand has some validity. None of us wants to feel that we are like everyone else. The last thing that should happen in the training of staff is stereotyping their thinking or eliminating differences in considering agency problems. Where difference is real, as for example between the extremely rural and the highly organized metropolitan setting, or between communities with predominately different cultures, the selection of cases should reflect such differences and teaching should include help in understanding and dealing with them.

But from our knowledge of the psychology of learning, we know that the beginning learner—and beginning in this sense is not necessarily equated with length of time on the job—is usually an anxious learner. He clings to the familiar and seeks answers usually through citing a specific case. What is involved in such instances for the group leader is first of all a recognition that this behavior is normal to beginning learning. What is infinitely more difficult for a group leader to do is to utilize this knowledge in a way that relieves the anxiety of group members and at the same time gives them enough security in their thinking and practice to move beyond this initial phase of their learning. The unskilled leader frequently permits himself to be drawn into giving answers to specific questions on a case and by so doing freezes the learning of the group at that level.

The group setting has certain obvious advantages with regard to the application of the principles of generalization. In his preparation for teaching a group, the skilled leader will need to outline his educational objectives and plan to employ case material to illustrate the principles he wishes to get across in such a way as to avoid having the discussion become fixed on the case per se. In addition, of course, the cross-fertilization of ideas which results

from group discussion can provide an alert leader with many cues for translating these ideas and comments into general principles for further use.

The principles concerned with skill in generalizing knowledge constitute a central concern in the educational process. If we view honestly our agency training problems in the light of these principles, we would have to come to the following conclusions: (1) teaching, whether carried on formally in training groups or through the supervisory process, is a highly skilled art; those who carry such responsibility must not only have a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and skills to be taught but must also be versed in learning principles and educational methods; (2) the identification of the educational content, principles and methods to be employed in teaching staff is in itself an educational function and must be systematically undertaken by those responsible for staff development programs and (3) opportunities must be provided for those in training or supervisory positions in the agency to acquire the knowledge and skills essential to their teaching function. Where the evidence points to the individual's need for strengthening his understanding and performance in the areas in which he is expected to teach, this must be undertaken before he is assigned responsibility for the teaching of others.

PROPOSITION 4: *Understanding dynamics of individual and group behavior in learning*²⁸

What does the learner bring to the learning experience in the agency setting? First of all, of course, he brings his previous educational experiences, and his approach to a new learning situation will be conditioned somewhat by these. Since such a large proportion of social workers in public welfare agencies have not had professional education, we need to look closely at the relationship of educational background to the learning situation.

Staff members in public welfare, except those who have had professional training, come to their employment unprepared educationally for much of what they will have to learn. They are confronted by subject matter and performance demands which immediately arouse their emotional responses and reactivate their biases, prejudices, and identifications. In the agency, as in the professional school, the individual "is expected to acquire ideas, attitudes, interests and ways of feeling, thinking and doing which he did not have before he entered the professional school."²⁹

The public welfare job places heavy demands on the emotional as well

²⁸ The discussion of this proposition is based to a large extent upon the concepts of Towle and Reynolds. (See footnotes, pp. 22 and 30.)

²⁹ Towle, p. 175-176. See footnote, p. 22.

as the intellectual equipment of the individual. In some ways, the untrained worker new to the job and the student new to professional education have many things in common in the demands placed upon them in the learning situation. Among other things, they must both acquire an understanding of the fundamentals of human personality and behavior and an awareness of the meaning and use of relationships, both areas that are highly charged emotionally and involve the individual in a struggle with his earlier patterns of thinking and behaving.

The college graduate may have had at least an introduction to the social, economic, and psychological knowledge essential to grasp of human problems as they are seen in social agencies, but even with this advantage, as important as it is, this knowledge is useless unless he incorporates it, together with new knowledge, in understanding his own emotional responses and relationships. This presents the first major learning problem for him and for the agency.

In addition to his previous educational equipment, the worker brings to his public welfare job his own life experiences, more particularly those which reflect his family and community relationships, his cultural ties, and his group identifications. These influence him from the first day on the job and continue to be a part of his learning experiences throughout his employment. Although they are not always identifiable and often their expression is unconscious, yet they are potent forces in facilitating or retarding learning. Every leader of a training group and every supervisor has seen these influences in operation even though they have not always understood their significance in relation to how people learn, or whether they learn at all.

For any real understanding of the learning process we must draw heavily on two fields of knowledge—educational psychology and the psychodynamics of behavior. Miss Towle has achieved a good deal of integration of these two bodies of theory as they relate to learning, although she observes that we rely more heavily on the foundation sciences of social work, namely psychoanalysis and social casework, for understanding the learning process in social work.³⁰ Bertha Reynolds expresses the point of view that learning involves the whole person; that it has important emotional and social as well as intellectual motivations and can only be understood in the light of all the sciences, biological, psychological, and social.³¹

Here we are concerned with the learning processes of adults, often older adults. Many of the principles of the psychology of learning and personality development are more easily understood and more flexibly applied in the academic setting where individuals usually accept themselves as being in the student role. Though equally helpful for adult learners in the employment situation, these principles must be applied in a somewhat different frame of reference in the agency because of the variety of learners and purposes involved.

³⁰ Towle, p. 43. See footnote, p. 22.

³¹ Reynolds, p. 62. See footnote, p. 30.

Individual involvement in learning:—Learning engages the individual intellectually and emotionally and requires a willingness and capacity on his part to change. Charlotte Towle points out that learning which effects change in behavior, as professional learning must do, will not occur unless the individual is emotionally engaged in it.³² A look at the problems which clients bring to public welfare agencies will show they are problems which inevitably call forth emotional reactions on the part of those who are expected to help. When workers have to meet these emotionally packed situations head on without prior professional education, permanent defenses against learning may be set up.

Since the nature of the learning to be done on the job is, like professional education, a *re-educative* process, we need to understand what this means in the agency setting. The very term “re-educative” is often fraught with “psychological threat of enforced change.” Miss Reynolds describes learning as taking on a new experience to the self and doing something with it, but she points out that the individual’s first reaction to a new experience is, “What will it do to me?” “What does it require of me?”³³

We know that the educational process in professional schools of social work demands a great deal of the student by way of personality modification and re-education around basic attitudes and the environment is planned to aid this process. The agency cannot or should not expect the same degree of change in staff members or in the same way. Nor should it be implied that all students coming to a school or all staff members coming to an agency bring basic attitudes or patterns of behavior which need reconstruction. The educational process builds on whatever is positive in the individual’s life experiences and ways of thinking, and helps him to use these resources in learning new skills. But human nature and social work being what they are, most of us coming into social work either by way of the agency or the school can be assumed to come with attitudes, biases or prejudices that need some re-educative treatment before we can help people whose problems stir up these feelings in us.

Recognizing, then, that in order to learn, staff members in public welfare agencies must become emotionally as well as intellectually engaged in their own re-education, what educational guides can be followed in accomplishing this? Briefly some of these are:

1. The educational situation requires that the initial approach to the learner be through his intellectual grasp of new knowledge. But at the same time those who teach must keep uppermost in their minds emotional responses of the learner as they affect learning. These responses may be influenced by the presentation of new ideas, a new intellectual reorientation which may bring a change in feeling, thinking and action. The professional relationship between teacher and learner, whether individual or group constituted, provides the means for working understandingly on the re-educative process.³⁴

³² Towle, p. 43. See footnote, p. 22.

³³ Reynolds, p. 57. See footnote, p. 30.

³⁴ Towle, p. 122. See footnote, p. 22.

2. Becoming emotionally engaged in the learning process does not imply a therapeutic situation for the learner. Quite the contrary. The agency's task, like that of the school, is education, not therapy. The individual's emotional difficulties are dealt with only insofar as they interfere with his learning and getting the job done effectively. If therapeutic treatment is indicated, the agency's responsibility is that of referring the individual for help elsewhere. Through his response to evaluation of his work and to efforts to define the problem, the individual reveals his ability or inability to progress in learning.³⁵
3. Ordinarily the individual who enters the field of social work by employment in an agency does not come with any understanding of what is expected of him in relation to the learning process. He may have some expectancy that a plan of orientation will be made for him but as a rule he is not aware of the nature of social work or the fact that, in addition to being an employee, he must in a sense also become a student.
The individual's preparation for this dual expectancy should really be done as part of the employment process, so that those who do not wish to become involved in new learning may withdraw. Certainly if this is not done prior to employment, it should be included as an early part of the orientation and supervisory processes. The individual will be more willing to become involved in the learning process and to change if he understands the nature of the changes expected and the extent of them, at least insofar as they can be projected from the agency's point of view. This in turn means that those responsible for his education and re-education must be clear as to what the agency expects by way of educational goals and how these will be achieved.
4. The role of the supervisor, or other agency teacher, in this initial stage of learning, Miss Reynolds points out, is that of security-giving. This stage of acute consciousness of self can be paralyzing to the staff member, at least temporarily. Our knowledge of behavior tells us that "everyone reverts to *some* earlier pattern when he is sufficiently threatened by a new situation."³⁶ The supervisor's or teacher's capacity to help under these circumstances lies in his understanding that this is a normal reaction on the part of the learner that can be overcome with additional knowledge and self-understanding.
5. A great deal in the agency setting can offer tangible, reassuring aids to learning during this period when the staff member struggles with insecurity. The organizational structure of the agency, its policies and procedures, the surrounding community resources, all offer opportunities for learning which are more familiar and less threatening. They are also essential areas of learning in the agency and if skillfully taught may help the staff member understand himself at the same time he is learning about the agency.

Anxiety as a factor

Anxiety is a normal experience for an individual in the process of learning and, depending on the circumstances, it can be either a retarding or motivating force in working toward educational goals. Some of the initial anxiety in learning stems from a lack of knowledge about the subject rather than from the threat of change learning implies. Realistically, the new learner

³⁵ Towle, p. 89. See footnote, p. 22.

³⁶ Reynolds, p. 75. See footnote, p. 30.

is helpless, confused, and fearful because of his unfamiliarity with the what, how, and why of the knowledge and skills to be learned. His intellectual grasp of new knowledge may bring comprehension and integration with it; or on the other hand, it may interfere with his assimilation for use of knowledge and skills until he reconciles or resolves conflicts produced by the new ideas in his learning.³⁷

This concept of behavior in learning has particular meaning for the learner in the agency. The learning expected of the new worker or of the staff member promoted to new responsibilities especially must be patterned with this and other educational principles in mind. As Miss Towle brings out, in addition to the learner's motivation, he has the inner pressure of needing and wishing to learn in order to feel more comfortable in knowing what to do and how to do it. "The educational task has become one of balancing giving and demanding, taking care not to give too much at once in too great detail. This entails giving first things first, with a realistic expectance that they be mastered. It also implies helping the learner put them to use and holding him accountable for doing so."³⁸

The principle of stability

The individual attempts to maintain his equilibrium by defending himself through resisting more change than he can survive and still continue to function. Miss Towle indicates that this can take place under "the necessity to understand and to help people whose experience is beyond that of the learner's at the time, thus making him feel helpless and confused. This invokes fear and the individual, for example, may go so far as to 'accept' new thinking but retreat from the use of it. Until the change in feeling has caught up with the change in thinking, he cannot integrate his new knowledge for use."³⁹

The problem of learning described by Miss Towle is akin to what Miss Reynolds calls the "sink or swim adaptation" stage of learning. "The learner gets an inkling of what people want of him, even though his preoccupation with himself makes him partially insensitive. The learner barely keeps up with what the situation demands from moment to moment and is dependent for approval or disapproval from people who are at home in the situation. Skilled teaching at this stage, carries on the function of increasing security through mobilizing the knowledge and skill the learner already has and encouraging him to trust and use his 'spontaneous responses.'"⁴⁰

Miss Towle calls attention to the need for understanding each *recurrent* response in relation to anxiety in learning. "One must consider the timing of anxiety in relation not only to the age of the learner and his stage of learning, but also to the progression of intellectual and emotional demands

³⁷ Towle, p. 33. See footnote, p. 22.

³⁸ Towle, p. 33. See footnote, p. 22.

³⁹ Towle, p. 31-32. See footnote, p. 22.

⁴⁰ Reynolds, p. 76. See footnote, p. 30.

in the total educational situation and the pressures in the individual's current life elsewhere."⁴¹

The points made by Towle and Reynolds are particularly helpful in relation to learners in public welfare agencies. As brought out in the consideration of the use of educational diagnosis in the agency, the variety of learners in public welfare agencies requires a differential approach to the assessment of their readiness for learning, individually or as groups; to their stage of progress in relation to agency standards; and to the maintenance of a "running diagnosis" of their problems and needs.

The integrative task

The integrative task confronting the individual in his learning is a process which must be understood and utilized by those responsible for his learning. The process of integration in learning does not occur with assembly line precision at specific points in the acquisition of knowledge. If it did, the educational process would be far easier to understand. Individuals vary a great deal in their integration of new knowledge, depending on both internal and external factors.

In the agency situation, opportunities for staff members to achieve integration in their learning can be purposefully created and maintained so as to insure maximum progress in this direction. Skilled supervision, recognition of the individual's learning tempo, opportunities for a positive application of new knowledge, participation in a variety of learning experiences within the agency and periodic evaluation conferences are all ways of working on this aspect of integration. Those responsible for teaching in the agency must accompany these structural provisions with a knowledge of emotional responses and an awareness of the psychodynamics of the integrative process.

The individual's capacity for the integrative task is, of course, a quality or group of qualities within himself, although the extent to which he can realize his full capacity or even extend himself beyond what he thought he was capable of, is in no small part dependent on the stimulation and help he gets through supervision and other opportunities for learning. As qualities of "capacity," Miss Towle gives particular attention to: (1) personality characterized by adequate ego development; (2) native and acquired intellectual ability; (3) physical condition and energy endowment; and (4) concurrent social circumstances.⁴²

The concepts underlying individual learning are prerequisite to an understanding of how learning takes place in a group situation. Yet the group situation itself creates something of its own out of combinations of individual differences. We have recognized for many years that those who teach individuals must have special knowledge and skills to be good teachers. We have been slow to appreciate that those who teach groups need another body of concepts and methods to be good group leaders.

⁴¹ Towle, p. 121. See footnote, p. 22.

⁴² Towle, p. 110. See footnote, p. 22.



NATURE AND EXTENT OF STAFF TRAINING GROUPS

FOR SOME TIME, Federal and State agencies have known that group training activities were quite extensively used as part of staff development programs. However, no survey of such groups had been made on a countrywide basis. The data submitted for the original study confirmed for the first time the actual situation with regard to the use of groups in training and pointed up the importance of a critical examination of this aspect of staff development in agencies.

The findings presented here are based on data submitted by 30 State departments of public welfare in response to a survey questionnaire.¹ The purpose of the questionnaire was two-fold: (1) to elicit specific data on a selected number of training groups held in each State between December 1, 1954 and November 30, 1955; and (2) to ask training supervisors, or other staff carrying training responsibility to record their experience with the group process in one training group which they had led.

Perhaps our first step should be to define the terminology used most frequently throughout this document:

Training supervisor. Within the framework of this publication, a training supervisor is the person on the staff of a State department of public welfare who has responsibility for the overall planning and direction of staff development activities in public assistance or child welfare or both. The training supervisor may lead training groups directly or may assist other staff members in doing so. In some States this staff person is known as a training or staff development consultant. As reported by States, both positions carry essentially the same functions and no distinction will be made between them here.²

Unit of training. A term which would describe training groups in a definitive way has been difficult to find. The term "unit of training" seems to come closest to doing this for our purposes. By unit of training is meant a total group training activity,

¹ See Appendix, p. 171.

² Actually, "consultant" is a more appropriate term in relation to the overall training function since it is a staff rather than line responsibility. The term "training supervisor" usually implies supervision of training programs but not of the staff who participate in the programs. A professional and administrative distinction between supervisor and consultant exists, but it is not pertinent to this study.

including all the group sessions within it. For example, a workshop is considered a unit of training, although it may be made up of any number of separate sessions.

Professional staff meeting. The use of this term may cause some confusion since its application here differs from the way it is used ordinarily. Of course, all professional staff meetings should contribute to the professional development of staff, but they are not usually classified as a formal training activity. But in many States and for various reasons, the regular professional staff meeting structure and time are often used to accomplish specific training objectives which have been developed as part of the State's training program. When the term professional staff meeting is used here, it refers to the adapted rather than traditional meaning of this activity.

Nature of Data

The study was concerned with educational activity in training groups and therefore, the survey questionnaire was designed to discover certain facts about current practice in the use of the group method as an educational medium in the training of public welfare staffs. Because complete coverage of training groups at all levels in each State was unrealistic, both for the States and for the study, the groups reported on here were limited to those for which the State training supervisor, or other person assigned this function, carried responsibility as part of the overall staff development program in the State. Leadership of the group may have been carried by the training person or by other supervisory or administrative personnel designated to do so as part of their job responsibility.

Four major questions constituted the basis for Part I of the questionnaire, the concern of this chapter:

1. To what extent are public welfare agencies using the group method in the training of staffs? What is the nature of these activities, their volume, number of staff involved, and amount of time spent? These data were considered important as a basis for determining whether the use of groups constitutes a sufficient block of agency activity to warrant attention to this problem.
2. For what purposes and to what educational ends are groups being used? Responses to this question were pertinent to the discussion of the educational process and to the determination of the avenues of learning most appropriate for reaching educational goals.
3. Who are the participants in these groups and what picture do they present as to the characteristics which are of importance in the groups process, such as level of education, years of experience, sex, position in the agency and type of work community?
4. Who carried responsibility for the leadership of these training groups? Inherent in this question was a concern with the knowledge and skills required in the teaching role and in the understanding of group process in learning. To what extent the line administrative and supervisory staff were expected to carry this

responsibility, what the role of the training supervisor was in the State program and how much and in what ways outside leaders were utilized was also important to know.

Extent and Method

The number of units of training organized during the specified period in the 30 States was 1,065. Included in this figure were institutes, workshops, professional staff meetings, and training center courses, without regard to the number of sessions which took place in each activity. The distribution among these various types of activity as identified in the replies was:

DISTRIBUTION OF UNITS OF TRAINING BY TYPE OF ACTIVITY

type of activity	number
Professional Staff Meetings	427
Institutes	354
Training Center Courses	147
Workshops	137
Total	1,065

Several observations are of interest in connection with the above distribution. The large number of training activities accomplished through the use of the professional staff meeting structure indicates a strong trend toward the integration of the training program with the ongoing work of the staff. While this has distinct advantages both administratively and educationally, it also presents certain problems in educational planning, particularly with respect to group training.

In preparing replies to the questionnaire, States were asked to include only those professional staff meetings which were specifically planned to achieve an educational purpose similar to those that would be undertaken as a part of the formal training program of the agency. Limitations on travel funds for bringing groups together, plus emphasis on the use of line supervisory staff to conduct training meetings were both factors that contributed to the large number of instances in which agencies used professional staff meeting time to meet specific training needs. The professional staff meeting also provided agencies with an opportunity for developing a series of meetings over a period of time on the same subject, a plan that has advantages educationally and is not always possible when the institute or workshop pattern is used.

A second observation relates to the use of the training center as a method of group training. This method usually implies an ongoing training unit set up administratively in the agency and available for the orientation of groups of staff new to the agency or promoted to new responsibilities. Of the 147 training-center groups reported, the vast majority represented induction programs for new public assistance and child welfare workers. One State reported an orientation course for new clerical staff and, in four instances,

training-center facilities were used to train new supervisors for their responsibilities. Among the 147 induction programs, two were child welfare worker-in-training units where the training program extended over a three-months' period.

The 1,065 units of training involved 18,785 participants. This does not represent an unduplicated count of individuals because in some instances individuals participated in more than one training activity during the year's period. This was particularly true of the supervisory and administrative staffs. But even though the total number involves some duplication, the data do reflect the large extent of staff involvement in group training activities, particularly in view of the fact that this figure represents only partial coverage within each State and omits 18 States altogether.

The extent of group training activity is further substantiated by an estimate of the staff time involved. The 1,065 units of training accounted for 2,996 work days, or 431,424 man hours.³

The extent to which the educational objectives of public welfare agencies are being met through the use of staff groups, with the accompanying investment of administrative time and funds, bespeaks the need for a study of the problems involved and more especially, for consideration of the knowledge and skills essential to the effective achievement of educational goals through the use of the group method.

Purposes and Content

The material on purposes and content of training meetings was summarized under five major headings, chosen as best describing the types of objectives and content characteristic of the training groups.

Training meetings to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the various job functions carried by agency staff members.—Meetings held for this purpose represented by far the greater proportion of all the training activities in the 24 States reporting this type of meeting. Institutes, workshops, or professional staff meetings were held on a great variety of subjects during the year's period.

These groups were more difficult to assess educationally than those in other categories. Data could not be assembled on what preceded these meetings by way of other training sessions or what follow-up took place in subsequent meetings or in individual supervision. Training groups in this particular area represent the core of the staff's practice and in themselves warrant intensive study. Here more than anywhere else, educational objectives and results can

³ Man hours were calculated by determining the average number in attendance per group, namely 18 members, multiplying this by the number of group days (2,996) and the result by 8 (the working hours in a day).

be obscured. The objectives of such groups are more difficult to identify and to achieve since they encompass the total range of knowledge and skill contributing to practice in casework, supervision, and administration.

Training groups for the orientation of new staff.—Use of training groups for orientation of staff was extensive; twenty-one of the 30 States reported use of orientation meetings. As indicated earlier, these groups were almost entirely for the orientation of public assistance and child welfare workers new to the public welfare staff; a few were set up for the training of new supervisors and one for the orientation of new clerical staff.

Use of the group method for this purpose seems more firmly established than any of the others, as evidenced by administrative provision by many States for training-center facilities for orientation purposes. This is understandable since orientation as a method of staff training was logically one of the first to develop in public welfare agencies and has become an accepted part of most agency programs.

Training groups designed primarily for the development of teaching skills.—This category included sessions for supervisory and administrative staff in relation to their teaching responsibilities; meetings to plan content and method in staff development programs; and meetings to study special skills in group process and leadership. Only 11 out of the 30 States reported meetings of this type and the number was quite small.

The use of this type of training group reflects two important goals in current staff development. It stresses the importance of recognizing the teaching component in all line positions and at all levels of operation. It also shows concern about the special nature of this responsibility and the particular knowledge and skills required in working with staff groups. Examples of activities of this type included a workshop to prepare district supervisors to hold training meetings with their casework staffs; an institute to evaluate a series of group meetings; and a series of professional staff meetings to prepare child welfare supervisors to lead workshops on adoptions.

Group meetings for the introduction, interpretation, or implementation of new or revised programs and policies.—The volume of this type of group meeting depended on the legislative activity in the individual States to a large extent. Nine States reported the passage of new legislation or the initiation of new programs which called for immediate communication of changes to staffs. In general, the objective of such meetings was to reach large segments of staff, in some cases all staff in the State, in order to get new or revised policies or programs into operation with a minimum of delay. In some instances this was accomplished by using local staff meetings. But more frequently one-day institutes were held simultaneously or successively throughout the State. Because of the urgency of the goal and the short duration of these institutes, they tended to be somewhat larger and to be information-

giving in method although in several instances, a general presentation was followed by small discussion groups.

Three States in particular reported that major organizational and policy changes in their State public welfare legislation made necessary a Statewide plan of staff training meetings to effect changes rapidly and uniformly. Meetings falling within this category presented both administrative and educational problems for States and sometimes educational goals were at variance with administrative goals. By and large, the training of staffs in the areas of new or revised policies or the establishment of new programs involved either psychological reorientation of staff or introduced new areas of knowledge and skill for staff to master, or both. This situation would make it extremely important that such one-day meetings be supported by continued discussion and study in local staff meetings and in individual supervision.

A meeting interpreting and implementing new policies and procedures growing out of State legislation with regard to payment for the care of public assistance recipients in public medical institutions was illustrative of the types of meeting in this category. Another State was confronted with the problem of putting into effect new State legislation in their aid-to-dependent children program. Since this new legislation was restrictive in intent, the interpretation and administration of the new policies growing out of the legislation presented a serious staff training problem. By bringing staff together in groups for discussion, State staff had more direct access to problems of staff morale at the local level. Other illustrations in this category involved initiation of a new program for aid to the disabled; the introduction of a new State law on adoptions; explanation and testing of a new Statewide recording plan; and implementation of a new State policy for the aftercare supervision of children leaving training schools.

Groups dealing with policy formation, program planning, or administrative changes at State level.—This category included a small number of groups that dealt specifically with top level administrative problems and responsibility and yet obviously had educational as well as administrative goals. In practically all instances, these groups were professional staff meetings consisting of key personnel at the State level. Meetings illustrative of this type included one on the development of a field visit report as a tool in administrative and field supervision; a study of child welfare review findings for the purpose of evaluating and planning in particular program areas; and meetings on clarification of the purposes and functions of the State department of public welfare.

A survey of the content of the group meetings by subject areas indicates that the training emphasis as reflected in the study was on the practitioner group and on the content areas of concern to them. A rough distribution of the 1,065 units of training by staff functions shows that approximately 70 percent of the groups were attended by caseworkers, public assistance and child welfare; another 13 percent by combinations of staff at the county or local level, usually involving directors, supervisors, and caseworkers, but with a pre-

ponderance in the latter category; 9 percent by supervisory or administrative staff at the county or other intermediate administrative level; and 8 percent by State office staff, including field supervisors or representatives.

A parallel way of looking at the groups is in relation to the subject areas selected for discussion. Here the grouping was difficult because of some overlapping, but specific subjects occurred frequently enough to be significant. Casework services—and this subject covered a wide range of topics relating to knowledge and skills in casework—was the subject matter for approximately 59 percent of the 1,065 training activities held. Orientation of workers accounted for 13 percent, and case recording which occurred frequently enough to be considered a separate item, an additional 2 percent. Thus approximately 74 percent of the groups were concerned directly with content of primary interest to the caseworker group.

Approximately 8 percent of the groups were concerned with supervisory practice; 7 percent with administrative practice. The latter category included professional staff meetings at the State level concerned primarily with policy making and planning, as well as those groups held specifically for the training of county directors and other staff in the content and skills of administration.

Other subjects reported, but less frequently, included the introduction of new policies or programs; training of staffs in group leadership; sessions on specialized content areas such as geriatrics, child development, blindness, etc.; and training activities for clerical staff.

Size and Duration

Related closely to the purposes and content of the meetings are the data on the size of groups and the length of training activities. Distribution of the 1,065 units of training by size of group shows the following percentages:

DISTRIBUTION OF UNITS OF TRAINING BY SIZE OF GROUP

number of participants	percentage
1-20	77.4
20-30	11.0
30-40	4.6
40-50	1.3
Over 50	5.7

The above percentages are encouraging from the standpoint of the achievement of educational goals since close to 80 percent of the groups were small enough to insure opportunity for participation and intensive study of problems.

The length of time scheduled for individual units of training is also of interest in relation to educational goals. Although no clearcut analysis of time

limits was possible because of their wide range, by grouping the 1,065 units under the following general categories some data of importance was obtained:

DISTRIBUTION OF UNITS OF TRAINING BY DURATION OF ACTIVITY

length of training activity	number of training units
One day or less	457
Two, three or four days consecutively	355
One day a month, over period of months	112
One week or longer consecutively	73
Once a week, over a period of weeks	68

The number of groups meeting for one day or less could be considered a problem educationally except for the fact that three-fourths of these were professional staff meetings. In these instances, educational continuity so important to learning would be more apt to be assured in such meetings than in one-day institutes or workshops held away from the flow of the day-by-day job, even though holding meetings away from the atmosphere of the daily job also offers some advantages.

Characteristics of Group Membership

Particular characteristics of group membership were selected as bearing on the study of educational problems, i.e., sex, educational background, work experience, and geographical setting. The data submitted by State agencies on these characteristics are significant both in terms of the gross picture they present administratively and the influence which their appearance in training groups has on the educational process.

Distribution by sex

The distribution of men and women in the groups varied with the purpose of the group. In the small number of group meetings which dealt primarily with administrative subjects such as fiscal policies and procedures or other operational aspects of the agency's work, more men participated than women, but, as might be expected, in practically all the staff groups concerned with services, men were far in the minority. However, where the ratio of men to women was one to two or three, and many groups were like this, the feeling of being outnumbered on the part of the men probably was not as great as where the ratio was more extreme, as for example, in one case-work institute, three men to twenty women; in a clerical orientation group, three to fifty-three; and in a supervisory workshop, one to twenty-nine.

Education and experience

Data submitted on education and experience items were incomplete, since many States apparently did not keep records of the constituency of staff

groups in relation to staff education and experience. Such information is an important factor in determining educational needs and goals, and should therefore be known and utilized. The sources of personnel data in the agency must be readily available to those planning educational programs.

Using the total number of 18,785 participants as a base, some general estimates can be made from the educational data submitted. Approximately one-fourth of the total was unaccounted for in the returns on education. An additional 671 participants belonged to clerical staff and were not included in the analysis of data on education since these positions required only high school education. Of the remaining 13,828 participants, approximately 72 percent had college education or higher, and approximately 28 percent had less than a college degree. This tallies quite closely with the Bureau of Public Assistance report which estimates the number of college graduates in public assistance social work positions countrywide to be 70 percent of those employed.⁴

Since some staff members, particularly supervisors and administrators, participated in more than one training unit, the education and experience of these individuals is reflected more than once in the above percentages. This gives a slight bias to these figures, but as far as can be estimated, the percentage distribution is not markedly influenced by this fact.

The data on length of experience in the agency were also incomplete for approximately one-fourth of the participants. Of those for whom this information was reported, approximately 21 percent had less than one year of employment with the agency; 53 percent from one to ten years; and 26 percent over ten years. Various surmises might be offered as to how this distribution affects educational programs, but they would have little validity unless experience could be matched more specifically than this study allows with the type of responsibility carried by individuals. For example, if the 26 percent with over ten years of employment included a high proportion of caseworkers, the significance for educational planning would be quite different than if this group included a high proportion of supervisory and administrative staff. In this instance, as in other items, the variation takes on more significance when present in the group situation.

Position in the agency

An analysis of the participants by groups showed that almost three-fourths were caseworkers and the remaining one-fourth supervisors or administrators.

Geographical location

A large number of groups were made up of staff from both rural and urban areas. Those made up entirely of staffs from rural areas were second and those including only staff from urban areas represented the smallest number. Since many large urban agencies have their own training supervisors,

⁴ *Public Assistance Personnel, Fiscal Year 1955*, issued by Bureau of Public Assistance, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D. C., March 1956.

the number of groups actually carried on in urban areas could not be fully reflected in the study.

The relationship of geographical distribution of members to educational planning and group process is an important one. Training personnel often have to decide to combine urban and rural staffs in the same group even when it would be more profitable to work with each group separately. Such decision must not only take into account such administrative realities as distance and funds, but also the variables in educational needs and opportunities in urban and rural localities.

Leadership of the groups

The responsibility for leadership was distributed as follows; the percentages relate to the total number of units of training (1,065):

Groups conducted by members of the staff other than training personnel, usually administrative or supervisory staff at State or local levels.	58%
Groups conducted by training consultants alone, including both public assistance and child welfare training personnel.	19%
Groups conducted with joint participation of a training consultant and another State or local staff person.	18%
Groups conducted with joint participation of the agency staff (either training consultant or other agency staff person) and an outside leader, or by an outside leader alone.	5%

This distribution reflects the efforts of State public welfare agencies to encourage supervisory and administrative staff at all levels to carry some staff training responsibility. The high incidence in the use of professional staff meetings for achieving group training goals is reflected in the 58 percent group. While these figures show more responsibility for training in groups being placed on supervisory staff, this was not taken into account proportionately in the number of training groups held for supervisory and administrative staff for the purpose of equipping them to carry such responsibility.⁵

The preceding data submitted by State agencies establish certain clues to agency staff training problems. The problems in public assistance are further pointed up by a recent report giving additional information about State and local staff. These data are reproduced here to underscore the magnitude and seriousness of the educational task in this group.

An examination of the functions assigned to the director and director-worker positions reveals some startling facts. For one thing, two-thirds of this group, in addition to major administrative responsibilities, must either provide

⁵ An item on the voluntary or involuntary nature of attendance at training meetings was included in the survey questionnaire. Data submitted were not significant since only States with local county autonomy were effected and even in them, the question of attendance was not raised.

direct supervision to a casework staff or carry a public assistance caseload, or in some instances, they may even have to combine all three functions in their position. In almost one-fifth of the local offices, the director is the only social work employee in the county, and must carry the entire public assistance caseload as well as serve as county administrator.

DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SOCIAL WORK EMPLOYEES
BY TYPE OF POSITION AND LOCATION OF OFFICE, JUNE 1955^a

position	totals	state office	local offices
Directors	2,329	495	1,834
Director-workers	1,966	—	1,966
Caseworkers	26,130	383	25,747
Supervisors	3,566	122	3,444
Field Representatives	617	617	—
All other social workers	1,678	801	877
Totals	36,286	2,418	33,868

^a *Public Assistance Personnel, Fiscal Year 1955*, issued by Bureau of Public Assistance, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C., March 1956.

These facts point to some very realistic difficulties in educational planning. One serious difficulty has been our failure to recognize the specific qualifications required in these multi-function positions and to employ staff with these in mind, or at least to gear in-service training programs toward preparing staffs progressively for the various functions assigned to them.

Often this problem of multi-function responsibility is further complicated by the initiation of additional programs which call for special knowledge and skills on the part of the county director or local office head, such as would be the case with child welfare services, rehabilitation programs for the blind and other groups of handicapped persons. This presents an educational problem both for the directors and the staff who carry the direct services in such programs.

The first line of defense in the supervision and training of caseworkers in public welfare agencies is at the local level and is vested to a large degree in the position of supervisor, county director, or local office head. These facts need to be considered in our educational diagnosis and planning in training programs.

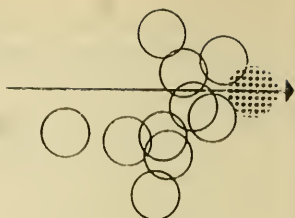
An analysis of these data, then, reveals the following points that are of significance in planning group training programs in public welfare agencies:

1. The number of staff training activities reported by 30 States for a year's period, together with the amount of staff participation and the volume of time involved, establishes beyond a doubt that the use of groups is an important area of concern which demands definitive study of the knowledge and skills involved in group educational methods.
2. The educational purposes and content of group meetings as reported by the States firmly support the conclusion that the primary emphasis of these meetings was on

casework practice and that, at least as far as this sample of groups is concerned, supervision and administration received comparatively less emphasis.

3. As a corollary to this, the participants represented in the groups came largely from casework staffs in the agencies, and the number of groups composed entirely of supervisory or administrative staffs were relatively few, even allowing for the proportionate distribution of these groups within the general agency population.
4. A large proportion of the participants had no professional education, a fact which would markedly influence the nature of staff training, individually and in groups. Of this number, however, the high proportion of college graduates offers a positive basis for learning on the job and for motivation toward professional education.
5. The marked extent to which leadership of training groups was the responsibility of line supervisory staff is in sharp contrast to the small number of training groups directed toward preparing them for this responsibility through the teaching of educational and group methods and skills.

These data pull us up short in relation to the magnitude of training problems in public welfare agencies. These educational problems are critical and call for remedial action. The most effective action of course is the acquisition of a sufficient number of professionally qualified staff. The crucial point of attack in relation to staff development goals must be in two basic areas—increasing our understanding of educational theory and methods and acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills in the use of the group process in training. Until these serious lacks are overcome, the agency's services to people cannot be adequately and qualitatively rendered.



RATIONALE FOR THE USE OF GROUPS IN TRAINING

GROUPS HAVE BEEN USED for training purposes since public welfare agencies began. While we have not always used the group method purposefully and scientifically in public welfare, we have had at least an intuitive awareness of the values of this kind of exchange and stimulation in the training of staffs. Our rationale for the use of groups is based on our recognition of the morale values derived by the participants and the fruitful opportunities groups provide for achieving educational objectives.

Group training meetings represent only *one* method of staff development, since in its broader sense, staff development includes every method used by an agency to improve the quality of services rendered by its staff. The group method must be adapted to local situations. Its use will vary with the size of the agency unit, the number, training, and experience of staff, and the educational goals.

Morale Values in Group Experiences

When individuals gather together in groups, a new entity is born. What occurs when staff is assembled in a group differs from what would occur if each member of the group remained in his individual job situation and worked toward the same goals.¹ The group offers a different set of experiences for the individual, in both personal and professional spheres. The morale values to be derived from group association often are beneficial to the individuals personally and to agency administration generally.

State agencies brought this fact out repeatedly in their replies to the questionnaire. One State training supervisor reported that "the most valuable effect of the training meetings was therapeutic, in that the workers, who carry on at great odds in their jobs, were given the opportunity for free expression about their problems and gained emotional support and greater challenge for

¹ John Walker Powell: *The Dynamics of Group Formation. Psychiatry*, 1948, 2, p. 118.

future performance." In another State, the agency administration recognized the fact that monthly professional staff meetings were extremely "important to the morale of a staff so widely separated geographically and so isolated professionally as this group is."

Attendance at a group does not automatically bring about a feeling of well-being and good morale. Whether or not these result, depends on the character of the group and its members, and on its leadership. Some members may come with high morale only to have it lowered by what happens in the group. Others may feel worse instead of better after meeting with a group where they contrast the advantages or progress of other staffs with their own. But even so, in general, agencies have found that group meetings raise morale and create an esprit de corps within the agency which strongly influences both the performance and the retention of staff.

From the group activities reported on by agencies, by far the greater majority of the training meetings seem to have been held away from the home base of the members, sometimes at a considerable distance; sometimes in the same general locality. Getting away, physically and psychologically, from the pressures of the daily job lightens the spirit and clears the mind. This is one reason why training consultants in planning workshops or institutes so often choose a comfortable, informal setting, entirely away from the agency where individuals can relax and devote themselves to the business at hand. Needless to say, such an atmosphere can greatly enhance the deliberations of the group. The communication between members which comes from having meals together, sitting around for casual, informal chats or arguments, enjoying an "off evening" may strongly influence the cohesiveness of the group and their ability to learn together productively. Even where a complete "flight" from daily realities is not possible, similar values can be achieved in meeting away from the office even though the group may still be within an agency environment in another locale. The disadvantages for the local staff in such instances can be lessened by the control of factors which are apt to be disrupting. But nevertheless, too often the staff members of the host agency never quite achieve the same sense of freedom as when they go to a meeting away from home.

Even more important than the change of environment are the therapeutic benefits which may be derived from association with professional colleagues, from an opportunity to share problems, get new ideas, and gain new perspective on the job. A group situation provides members with such opportunities when it represents a positive and stimulating experience for them. Here, as in every aspect of the learning process, the benefits to be derived must be evaluated with the individual learner in mind. A member may gain reassurance by discovering that his concerns and problems are common to the group. He may take comfort in knowing that members of the group can help each other through pooling their experience and thinking. On the other hand, some people find it hard to learn in a group, although they may be responsive in individual supervision. Such individuals tend to withdraw into themselves in the group and close off, rather than utilize, the avenues of learning available. The psychological readiness of the individual for an ex-

perience in group learning must be recognized as an important factor by those who plan and lead groups.

When staff members assemble in groups, and the atmosphere is positive, differences give way to an identification with their agency as a community institution which commands their respect and support. They are better able to close ranks against outside attacks and to galvanize their energies in overcoming their problems. Through the group they are able to communicate, in ways which they could not do individually, their feelings of pride, concern, neglect, or protest in relation to "the agency" for which they work. The agency comes to mean something more to them. They are able to lift their sights above the struggles of the daily job to the social importance of their agency in the community.

Staff groups reported in the study spontaneously expressed these feelings. They stressed the stimulating benefits of closer association with fellow workers and a resulting sense of belonging to one agency even though contacts were limited. Others saw in these meetings the administration's recognition of the staff's problems and an expression of the agency's willingness to help—a strong morale factor in any work situation.

Public welfare staffs often work against overwhelming odds. State reports show some use of group discussion to handle feelings which stem from a sense of frustration or anxiety in the job. Morale was heightened in discernible ways in a number of groups through the use of the group process to lessen tension and provide opportunity for ventilation of feelings.

Members can come to a training group greatly disturbed over budget cuts, restrictive new legislation, public attacks on the agency, or a number of other events, the impact of which has been felt throughout the staff. In such instances, the group can serve as a safety valve in which much of the feeling is released and the energy of groups channeled into constructive ways of correcting or handling the problem.

This was well illustrated in the group of district supervisors, already mentioned (page 25), who had assembled for a series of meetings on group leadership. In the weeks prior to these meetings, the agency had gone through a major reorganization which threatened the status and the function of the district supervisors. The group leader was aware that the members' anxiety and protests would come out in the training meetings and anticipated this by allowing time for the district supervisors to express their resentment against the State office, and their fears as to what the future would hold for them. An observation submitted by the leader in response to the study questionnaire confirmed the wisdom of this and the values which were derived from using the group process in this way. The leader of this group pointed out that the "timing of the group meetings in relation to anxiety around reorganization was most propitious. The opportunity to let off steam and to gain an understanding of the agency's point of view, cleared the air and placed the problem in a more objective light. Not only did the group begin to move in relation to their educational objectives, but the climate in their own local offices greatly improved."

The morale values derived from group participation can be numerous, but the few mentioned here seem characteristic of the values to be found in training groups in public welfare agencies. Such groups are therapeutic in the sense that they remove staff members momentarily from the pressure of the daily job and give them an opportunity to share problems and experiences with their co-workers. They serve as a channel for staffs' communication with each other, for strengthening their identification with the overall agency and for offering them a way of dealing with feelings about major crises in the agency.

Productive Learning Through Groups

A variety of ways in which the group method is particularly adapted to effecting productive learning may be identified here. First of all, the individual not only learns *in* the group but he learns *through* the group. In an individual learning situation, the learner uses the contributions of his supervisor as a teaching person and assesses them in relation to his own experiences, needs, and motivations; his learning is developed around particular case situations. In the group, the individual is exposed not only to what the person in the teaching role gives him, but also to the contributions of other individuals and the cross-fertilization of ideas resulting from group discussion. His horizons of knowledge may be extended and a wider choice of ideas or solutions provided. His own involvement in the discussion, through a give-and-take process with others, illuminates new areas of knowledge for him and stimulates him to examine his own convictions and attitudes in relation to those of the rest of the group. In this instance, the individual is learning *through* the group. Interaction in the group produces the environment in which learning may take place.

Learning *in* the group is a more passive experience. It may occur through the individual's listening to what is presented by the leader or by other members of the group assigned responsibility for presentation of material, or through selecting from the discussion of others what seems useful to him. He may learn without necessarily becoming engaged in the interaction of the group, or without revealing the fact that he is learning.

One elderly county director sat in a group, protesting the "frill" of casework services and expressing open hostility to the State office because of its insistence on certain policies which were directed toward more adequate and skilled casework help for clients. He showed the same resistance to change in his relationship with his field representative. But after meeting with the group over a period of six sessions, he was able to change his mind about casework services; in the group he had tried to "cover up" his lack of conviction and knowledge in this area; but as he listened to others whose opinions he respected, he began to think there might be something to this idea, after all. For this individual, such learning could occur only in and through the group because it took the impact of many ideas and the threat of losing status

with the others in the group for him to accept what he had been fighting against for years on his job.

The group permits a certain privacy of thought that is not always possible in the one-to-one supervisory relationship where the very process of verbal communication sometimes puts pressure on the individual to say something before he may be ready to say it. In the group, the individual can reserve judgment, can "change his mind in private," as Grace Coyle puts it, without being open to censure or feeling an obligation to respond.

Differences of opinion, or even open conflict between members in the group can produce an environment in which some members of the group will learn, provided of course the leadership is such that the positive rather than the negative aspects of the conflict are emphasized. Obviously not everyone learns in the same way or at the same tempo. Within any given group, a variety of learning patterns will be apparent simultaneously. This makes the task of the leader a difficult one, since he needs to understand in what ways each individual is struggling with his own learning, at the same time that he is aware of how the group as a whole is dealing with the problem of learning.

While the group situation contributes to learning in ways not possible in the one-to-one teaching relationship, the converse is of course equally true. Particular aspects of learning can take place only within the more intensive teaching situation provided by individual supervision. This brings us to the question of how we determine educationally which method is most appropriate in relation to particular goals.

Relationship of Method to Educational Goals

In relation to this question, we would agree first of all that in many educational areas, both individual and group instruction can go on concurrently to advantage. In actual practice it is not so much a question of dividing subject matter in relation to method, as it is being clear diagnostically as to the educational needs and learning patterns of individuals and making sure that learning, from whatever source, becomes integrated. The most appropriate place for such integration to take place is through individual supervision.

A more definitive distinction between the use of the group and the individual method in teaching lies in the way in which the method is used. In the group, the emphasis is on the generalization of knowledge for the benefit of all members. In individual supervision, the emphasis is not only on how the individual reacts to and uses the knowledge he acquires but also on how he involves himself in emotional as well as intellectual change through a professional relationship with a supervisor-teacher.

The decision as to what should be taught on an individual basis and what should be taught through the group must be based diagnostically on the educational needs of the learner. For example, the staff member whose own personal deprivation in early childhood makes it difficult for him to accept

placement of children away from their own homes will require considerable individual help and support in understanding how his own emotional experiences influence the way he works with clients. For such a worker, learning would have to have an intensive focus, where on a case-by-case basis he could be helped to change his attitudes toward "inadequate parents." This same staff member, however, could also profit from group consideration of this problem. He may discover, for example, that many people feel this way about such parents, and that disapproving attitudes can stem from what is conceived of as a violation of our social values as well as from judgments growing out of an individual's own experiences. In the group, the individual may get a different perspective which enables him to grapple more successfully with his own attitudes. This, in turn, may help him to feel less guilt as he works on the problem more introspectively in individual supervision.

Education in the group is a more impersonal process and therefore less threatening to the ego. For this reason, real values can come from combining group and individual teaching in relation to social work content. Since the nature of social work knowledge is what it is, lightening its emotional impact through a combination of intensive and extensive learning experiences can have advantages.

Certain assumptions about group teaching and learning are implicit in this discussion. The group leader, though aware of the educational needs of individuals in the group, must incorporate them into the general discussion rather than permitting an individual teaching situation to arise within the group. Miss Reynolds points up this problem in the following way:

Although skill in leadership of group discussion is primarily one of sensing the movement of various minds in relation to a certain subject matter, it is necessary to see individuals in their differences, as well as in their sharing of a common ground. This does not mean following the individuals into bypaths of their own while the rest of the group waits (a mistake in discussion-leading into which caseworkers are apt to fall), but it does mean that one cannot ignore differences except at peril of losing the whole group.²

This poses the problem of balance in discussion-leading and suggests, as Miss Reynolds does in the same chapter, that although the leader must have the group's interests foremost in his mind, he must realize that the members can be served best only when he has some diagnostic understanding of the role of each group member in relation to group goals.

There is rarely an instance when individual and group methods of teaching cannot be combined to enrich learning if the purpose of each is clearly defined and the leadership in each is skilled in relation to the educational purpose.

² Bertha Capen Reynolds: *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942, viii, 390 pp. (p. 121).

We ought to look for a moment at some misconceptions about the educational use of groups. To establish training groups in lieu of individual supervision and teaching would be unwise. Neither method can substitute for the other, but because of some of the realities confronting public welfare agencies, we may be tempted to think so. For example, where supervision of staff is inadequate either because agencies have too few supervisors or because certain supervisors are not professionally equipped for their task, transferring responsibility for the individual aspects of teaching and learning to group training activities would be a mistake. Undoubtedly this sometimes happens and to the extent that it does, individual supervision will continue to be "the weakest link in the chain."

In recent years there has been a trend toward use of the group method in the supervision of staff. "Group supervision" is a very unclear process as now practiced in the field and varies considerably with individual interpretation of the term.³ While staff meetings may be planned with a supervisory purpose, they cannot be a substitute for the individual supervisory relationship and the nature of the learning derived from it. True, certain aspects of supervision, particularly those concerned with the supervision of administrative matters, lend themselves very well to the group process. But group supervision and group training are two different processes. The former combines the components of individual supervision and the administrative staff meeting and although such meetings undoubtedly carry educational dividends, they are not primarily educationally focused. The very term "group supervision" implies the "direction" of staff and injects into the group situation, an administrative relationship between leader and members which distinguishes such meetings from those with a purely educational purpose.

The group method should not be considered solely as a way of economizing on time. Although time actually may be saved, this does not constitute the primary reason for selecting this method of training. Take, as an illustration, the presentation of a new policy or program to the staff. If this had to be taught staff member by staff member on an individual basis, it would not only be time-consuming but would sacrifice many of the benefits resulting from group discussion of such subjects. The agency's purpose in planning such group sessions would be related to the educational goal of insuring uniform understanding of the subject and using group discussion to bring about further clarification of the issues. The educational goal related to individual understanding and use of the policies still remains a matter for individual supervision.

We can keep our thinking straight on the relationship between the individual and group method in training if we hold to the frame of reference provided for us by Tyler in the establishment of educational goals, and more particularly his questions as to what educational experiences are needed to

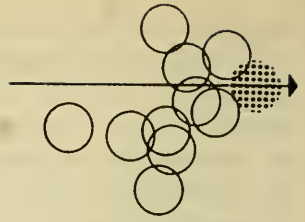
³ Unpublished paper by Eileen Blackey: Definition of Group Supervision as a Method in Supervisory Practice. Research Seminar, School of Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University, June 1955.

carry out educational objectives and how best they can be effectively organized.⁴

Agencies can accomplish much through the use of the group method in staff training. Like any other undertaking however, some directions must be charted to insure sound and effective results. Certain specific concepts govern the organization and functioning of groups and a selected number of these can be profitably applied in educational situations. The concepts selected for discussion here were determined in large degree by their usefulness in dealing with the educational problems submitted by agency training personnel. They deal with three major aspects of group functioning—how groups are formed; the significant interpersonal relations within groups; and the process of group deliberation.⁵ All three are of great importance to planning and carrying out educational activities in groups.

⁴ Ralph W. Tyler: *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950. 83 pp. (p. 59-68).

⁵ Categories for Description of the Group Process. Prepared by Social Group Work Faculty, School of Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University, 1956. (mimeographed).



THE PROCESS OF GROUP FORMATION

THE PUBLIC WELFARE AGENCY is dependent upon groups of various kinds for the achievement of its objectives day-by-day and on a long-range basis. Primary among these are groups organized formally for the purpose of providing in-service training for agency staffs.

Traditionally in forming training groups, the emphasis has been on: for what? how? when? and where? These questions represent a logical formula to be observed in the organization of training programs generally. However, the significance of each of these questions and their relationship to each other in terms of concepts relating to group process is a much less familiar area to training personnel. The questions of "for what" and "for whom" are specifically related to the concept of group formation. The "how," "when," and "where" aspects of the group process in training represent other concepts in looking at groups which will be dealt with later.

Groups, in general, have been classified by the various social science fields as falling into two major categorical systems. These systems are described in different theoretical frames of reference. But for the purpose of this study, categorizing groups into *formal* and *informal*, the system developed in *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*,¹ has been selected as most usable. We are concerned here only with the concepts underlying formal groups since they represent the framework most applicable to staff training situations. The formal organization may have within it, or parallel to it, an informal organization which influences the group members and consequently group functioning.

¹ Leadership and Authority in the Local Community. *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*, Summer-Autumn, 1952, Vol. 7, No. 4; Vol. 8, No. 1. Additional definitions of group categories may be found in the works of other authors, as for example: Helen Hall Jennings: *Leadership and Isolation: A study of personality in interpersonal relations* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1950, xvii, 349 pp.), where the terms "socio" and "psycho" are used; Bernice Baxter and Rosalind Cassidy: *Group Experience: The democratic way* (New York: Harper, 1943, xii, 218 pp.), where groups are classified as "spontaneous" and "guided;" or Charles Cooley: *Social Organization* (Chicago, Ill.: Free Press, 1956, 436 pp.) where the distinctions "primary" and "secondary" are used. The classification made by the *Autonomous Groups Bulletin* seemed most appropriate for use in this study.

Training groups in public welfare agencies are identified as formal groups because they have the following characteristics:

1. They are organized formally through administrative provisions with certain expectations on the part of the agency and the group member.
2. They are aimed at accomplishing specific educational purposes and therefore are task-centered.
3. They are constituted within the formal structure of the agency.
4. They are arranged for designated members.
5. They are conducted by leadership assigned from within or outside the agency.
6. They are executed within a specified period of time.

The characteristics of the formal group influence the group's membership and goals in particular ways. Here we will deal with the determination of group membership and the development of group goals, two of the primary concepts in the process of group formation. Group membership and group goals are inseparable. Since a public welfare agency by virtue of its organization is, in a sense, already structured in groups, some aspects of which influence the composition or membership of training groups, the principles involved in the determination of group membership seem a logical place to begin.

Determination of Membership

The data requested of State public welfare agencies under Part II of the study questionnaire² called for observations by group leaders of specific areas of the group process in selected groups which they had conducted. The 23 responses to this section of the study provided a range of training groups, as follows: orientation groups for public assistance or child welfare workers; training groups for casework staff; training meetings for State office staff; training groups for supervisory staff; and combined training groups for workers, supervisors, and administrators.

Identifying these groups by type is not as important as looking at how the membership is determined in training groups and how the educational goals are related to the type of group established. Specific factors concerned with the composition of groups appeared in the study questionnaire and were reported on by the agencies. These were administrative and organizational factors, sex, education and experience, and position in the agency. Although data on age and seniority were not requested, they are definite influences and

² See Appendix, p. 171.

were reflected to some degree by group leaders in their respective group observations.

Administrative and organizational factors

In the organizational and administrative structure of the public welfare agency itself are factors which influence group formation for training purposes. First of all are the organizational patterns which traditionally exist in agencies. For example, in metropolitan centers, workers and supervisors are usually organized administratively into units to cover the city by districts. When groups are being set up for training purposes, these administrative units or combinations of them seem to provide a logical basis for group membership. Perhaps, however, we act too automatically in this regard simply because it is convenient.

At times, constituting "existing" groups as training groups may be appropriate and valid. But in other instances, the principles of educational diagnosis would indicate the importance of grouping on a different basis. The metropolitan agency setting, because of its larger staffs and comparatively compact territory, offers more leeway in forming training groups, than do rural settings. The high incidence of professional staff meetings used as a medium for group training activities reported by State agencies is worth recalling in this connection. The professional staff meeting is an example of an "existing" agency group which may automatically become the basis for a training group. Such an arrangement has some administrative and educational advantages, but the undifferentiated use of such staff groups as the basis for achieving educational goals requires further examination and study.

The same agency may find itself confronted with different organizational patterns in various parts of its program. For instance, the rural areas of a State present quite a different picture from the urban areas. In rural areas, the problem may be one of too few staff to constitute more than one group in relation to training needs. In such instances, the skill required by the leader lies in how to work with such a group rather than in how to organize it.

Staff assignment is another important basis for group membership in public welfare agencies. The nature of the job assignment and the level of responsibility carried both operate as deciding factors. Training may focus on the needs of particular staff groups such as clerical workers, public assistance workers, child welfare workers, institutional staff, legal staff, or other staff groups. Or it may focus on the training needs revealed for various functional levels of staff in such areas as direct practice, supervision, administration, consultation, etc. Of course, many other factors can enter into decisions about membership, but job assignment is an important starting point in deciding what groups are to be formed.

In child welfare programs, the distribution of staff throughout a State poses still another problem in forming training groups to meet their particular needs. The local child welfare worker may be the only worker carrying child welfare functions and the geographical spread of such workers makes group

training for them difficult. This is true to some extent also for the child welfare supervisors and consultants, particularly in the States with smaller agencies, where the limited numbers of such staff curtail the opportunities for them to have concentrated staff development help in relation to their special program functions.

Because of the nature and purpose of public welfare agencies, attendance of staff at training activities is usually required. This involuntary aspect of group membership may influence the attitudes and participation of the members. In informal groups, such as social clubs, the element of choice in becoming a member is a highly influential one and is necessary to the life of such groups.³ In the formally organized group such as the training group, the element of choice usually is not present since the goals of the training group are highly correlated with the goals of the agency, and the individual employee is considered to have obligations in relation to such goals. Yet we need to keep in mind that the individual's motivation toward learning and his freedom of choice in choosing his learning are closely related. Where individuals do not have this choice, much more must be done to stimulate interest among prospective members and to bring about positive motivation toward agency training activities.

The administrative and organizational framework of an agency can be supportive and facilitating in the formation of training groups, or it can be restrictive and frustrating in the determination of group membership and the achievement of sound educational goals. When these elements are recognized as being significant in effective group formation, avenues should open for working with them more effectively.

Distribution of members by sex

Sex distribution in group membership is significant since it may influence interpersonal relations and interaction in such a way as to create problems which interfere with the learning process. Most of the problems in this area in social work are in relation to the preponderance of women over men in many groups.

Disproportionate distribution of the members in terms of sex may interfere with successful group functioning. First of all, the group may heighten the individual's need to maintain his identity. This is especially true of the organized group, in which, Scheidlinger states, there is greater control of individual unconscious drives; greater resistance to forces of suggestion and regression; and greater preservation of the individual's identity.⁴ Anything which makes it more difficult for the individual to achieve these controls could influence his behavior adversely in relation to the rest of the group. If his identity is threatened by being greatly outnumbered by members of the

³ Leadership and Authority in the Local Community. *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*, Summer-Autumn, 1922, Vol. 7, No. 4.

⁴ Saul Scheidlinger: *Psychoanalysis and Group Behavior: A Study of Freudian Group Psychology*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1952, 245 pp. (p. 48).

opposite sex, he may respond by attack or withdrawal, or, of course, he may feel quite comfortable in the group, depending on his accustomed ways of meeting such life situations. Nor is it only a question of how the person in the minority behaves; how the other members behave toward him also affects the total group process.

Our cultural heritage places a higher value on the achievements of men than of women and attributes to the male in our society a status which, sociologically speaking, gives him the superior role in the conduct of world affairs. The profession of social work is still looked upon to a great extent as a woman's profession. The appearance of men in social work positions, particularly in situations where they are vastly outnumbered by women, can arouse conflict with regard to status in either men or women members. Feelings of superiority or inferiority can be consciously or unconsciously engendered.

When men are greatly outnumbered in a group, they may have a feeling of protest against the opposite sex. The women in the group, on the other hand, may give more weight to the comments and ideas of the male minority by virtue of the cultural and psychological status of men in our society. This may hold even when the group does not rate the individual very high in personal qualities or professional competence.

The status of the male member in the eyes of the group will determine whether he becomes someone around whom the group rallies or whether they tend to ignore or humor him. Whatever his role, it becomes heightened by the added factor of his feeling superior or inferior because he is the only man, or one of several men, in a group of women. A high degree of competence, prestige, or personal attractiveness on the part of the male member may cause more interaction to go on around him than would be good for the equilibrium of the group. If he is retiring, shy, and uncomfortable with his lot, he may be shut out of the group entirely or even become the target of their hostility or ridicule.

Balancing groups with respect to the distribution of men and women cannot always be achieved in the public welfare agency because of various uncontrollable factors. The extreme imbalance illustrated by a group of three men and twenty-six women and another of one man and eleven women presents some evidence of this. The first of these groups was an orientation course for new workers, an activity which is usually automatically determined by the number of new staff awaiting orientation. The second group represented the total supervisory staff of three counties brought together for a workshop on supervision. In both of these cases, it would not have been administratively feasible, or perhaps even educationally desirable, to make other arrangements of these groups. But where some selection of membership is possible and where distribution of the sex of the members seems potentially important in interpersonal relations of the particular group, the group might profitably be set up with this in mind. But in instances where this is not possible and the group presents a problem in this respect, the leader's understanding of the psychodynamics of the situation and his ability to minimize the minority's

discomfort, aggression, withdrawal, feelings of stigma or whatever other reaction may result from being outnumbered and sometimes overwhelmed represents a way of minimizing the situation.

Very often the group itself is uncomfortable when representation by sex is out of all proportion. We may find women members trying to lighten the situation by some humorous comment to or about the "only man." In three training groups where this imbalance occurred, leaders reported that the lone man in the group insisted on presenting "the *man's* point of view," when the discussion was on "absent fathers." Expressions such as this give the leader cues to the real feelings and attitudes being expressed both by the individual and the group, since these constitute the substance from which group morale and interaction are derived.

One agency submitted the following interesting illustration of what happens when one sex outnumbers the other in a group. This was a group of eight new supervisors, two women and six men. All but one of the men were in the same age group and had similar family situations which contributed much to their peripheral conversations. The two women were older and their families were grown. The men in the group formed a cluster around the oldest of their number, an experienced, older man, to whom they looked for support and guidance. The two women feeling outnumbered, formed a pair group of their own. The report of the leader showed that although there was a good group spirit, the members themselves were divided into two sub-groups on the basis of sex. Although other factors influenced the sub-groupings here, the sex distribution was a strong determining factor.

The major reason for calling attention to the ratio of women to men as a factor in group formation is to identify it as a potential source of difficulty and to point out how such imbalance may affect group interaction. The major concern of the group leader in the training situation is to anticipate and understand the problem as it affects the educational process in the group.

Education and experience

The education and experience of individual staff members are two of the most difficult factors to deal with in forming training groups. Three additional characteristics should be considered as an integral part of this aspect of the problem too, namely, age, seniority, and the quality of the staff member's experience and his capacity to develop in relation to educational goals.

Education and experience are highly individual matters. When present, they do not always indicate professional growth; when absent or limited, they do not always indicate poor potentials for growth. Handled on an individual basis, these variables are often amenable to treatment. However, when they appear in a group situation, they present quite a different problem since they may affect the learning progress of all the members.

Range of the problem.—In an orientation group of nine new public assistance visitors, work experience ranged from 28 years to less than 6 months. All members of the group were college graduates but two had been teachers

for 28 and 16 years respectively and 2 others had been secretaries for 5 years prior to social work employment. The remaining three were recent college graduates. The group ranged in age from 23 to 53 years. In another orientation group, the age range was 22 to 60 years. In another instance, a State office staff training group made up of department directors, consultants, and field staff represented experience from 1 to 20 years; 10 of the group had full professional training, 13 had partial graduate social work training, and one had no professional training. Still another group made up of public assistance visitors, included 1 with only eighth grade education, 7 with high school education, and 3 with partial college work.

In each of these situations, the group leader was concerned about how to plan the group's experience in such a way as to accomplish the training goals despite these extreme variations in education, training, and age. The fact that determining group membership is directly related to the achievement of training objectives, is in itself applying a principle of prime importance in setting up group training. The more this fact can become a conscious part of our planning in public welfare agencies, the more imaginatively we can deal with the very real problems which exist in these settings with regard to the formation of training groups.

Personnel who are responsible for planning training programs readily recognize problems of this type. Most of them would agree that educational goals might be more successfully attained if particular training groups could be formed on the basis of homogeneity of education, experience, and ability of staff. Within any one staff group or among staff groups, great variation can exist in these areas, making the application of evaluative criteria in the forming of groups fraught with difficulty. In this connection, Bertha Reynolds makes the point that the selection of group members by ability and educational status runs the risk of intensifying in a destructive way feelings of inferiority, on the one hand, and of having "arrived" on the other.⁵ We are caught between Scylla and Charybdis in making such a selection. Our knowledge of individuals and groups warns us that personal status is a powerful factor and must be honored; yet, on the other hand, we are also aware of the educational conditions which must obtain to make optimum learning possible. Despite this dilemma, agencies have been ingenuous in dealing with difficulties in this area.

Selective use of content.—One way of approaching the problem of diversity in education and experience in the group is through a selective use of the content to be presented. Orientation groups in particular lend themselves to this approach. Such groups can rarely be formed on the basis of similarity of education and employment background, age, etc., since their formation is automatically geared to the employment process. In agencies where employment qualifications are high and evaluative criteria are applied in the employment of staff, the membership of the orientation groups will of course present a higher degree of homogeneity. These instances are relatively

⁵ Bertha Capen Reynolds: *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942. viii, 390 pp. (p. 93).

few, however, and invariably a newly employed group of workers will constitute an educational problem in relation to group training.

In some of the orientation groups reported, agencies met this problem in part through a selective approach to the content which could be presented in a group where considerable individual variation in education and experience existed, leaving to individual teaching and supervision the content which involved the learner more intimately with his own lacks and needs.

The somewhat general nature of orientation material, plus the fact that, regardless of individual variation, all members have the common anxiety of being introduced to a new job, tends to neutralize, but by no means eliminate, the educational problems. Usually the group orientation process is long enough in duration to permit an effective combination of group discussion and individualized reading and consultation, the latter being directed toward developing more evenness in the learning situation and preparing the disadvantaged individual to participate more securely in the group.

Where diversity in education and experience exists in groups other than those for orientation purposes, a similar differential approach to content may mitigate the problem. If such a situation exists in a group of caseworkers, for instance, the content would have to be geared to the needs and background of the great majority of the members, provided there is such a majority. But the needs of those who rank below or above the majority should be recognized also. This may be done by planning training material to be utilized in individual supervision or by breaking the group up into sections in an effort to meet several levels of need more effectively. Of course, in this latter instance, the question of leadership is always a very real problem.

Groups whose members have a high degree of diversity in the areas of education, experience, and ability may "run away" in one of several directions. Either the more advanced members insist on keeping the group's discussion at their own level, thus discouraging those who are less advantaged, or the group settles for the learning level of the least well equipped, and those who could contribute most withdraw into resentful silence. Marked contrast in experience among members, as between beginning and seasoned staff members, can at times result in the latter contributing richly to the learning process of new staff, but eventually the educational needs of experienced staff must also be met. Such situations call for real skill, and considerable art on the part of the group leader in deciding what content to use and even more important, how to use it.

Application of selective criteria

In certain instances group members can be selected on the basis of education and experience without psychological damage to individual staff members or staff morale. If the size of the staff permits the formation of more than one group for a particular training activity, length or type of experience can be used as a basis for the division of staff into groups. This

is usually acceptable to the members; in fact, they often prefer such grouping as a way of meeting their respective needs more adequately. For example, an annual workshop planned by one State for a group of 59 caseworkers was scheduled as a general session the first morning. Following this, and for the remaining three sessions, the group was divided into four discussion groups on the basis of length of service with the agency. Another agency confronted with a great variation in education, experience, and attitudes within a group of 15 caseworkers for whom a series of training meetings had been planned in order to improve the quality of casework service, was concerned over the possibility that the more experienced workers would be resistant to attending meetings with the younger caseworkers. In order to give the workers with more years of employment some recognition, an initial one-day meeting especially for them was held in advance. The contribution they would be able to make to younger staff in the group discussions was stressed and questions submitted by them on the proposed training material were incorporated for use in the sessions to follow. Involving "senior" personnel in a preliminary session proved to have productive results in the group. In such a situation, however, the leader would need to watch for over-participation by what might be a "sub-group" in the sense that the experienced workers could become identified as a group, as a result of their preliminary meeting before moving into the larger group. This would be particularly important if the group of experienced workers outnumbered the younger staff.

Sometimes outside controls will permit the use of selective devices in forming the group. One State reported on a series of institutes held for casework staff throughout the State. These institutes were conducted by an outside leader who asked that the groups not exceed 25 in number so as to insure conditions favorable to good group participation and discussion. This meant that not all of the agency's caseworkers could attend and some criteria had to be established as a basis for selection of those who did. The following criteria were arrived at as a basis for selection:

Persons who had taken Casework I, either in extension or full-time graduate training were to be excluded.

Workers who were not to be retained in the agency were excluded. This applied to staff members who were soon to retire, those going to other jobs, or those to be released for poor performance.

Workers who showed interest in the job and had potentialities for development were to be given preference.

Staff coverage had to be arranged for local offices.

This is an interesting set of criteria. By using them, the agency was able to form groups with similar background, training, and ability so that the leader could develop her subject matter in harmony with the stage of development of the group. Both the leader and the groups felt the educational benefits derived were infinitely greater under this type of plan. Though this illustration as recorded by the agency makes its point, and makes it well, our under-

standing of this approach would be enhanced if we knew more about how the third point in the criteria, the selection of workers on the basis of job interest and potentialities for development, was actually achieved. This could be a highly explosive criterion and might carry with it a "superior-inferior relationship by which prestige is bestowed on one and stigma on the other."⁶ On the other hand, selection for participation in this type of educational opportunity is a logical way to recognize individual motivation and professional growth, both of which must be nurtured if leadership essential to moving the agency program forward is to emerge and be utilized. Much will depend on how such selection is accomplished and on how the experience of the group is utilized for the benefit of all staff.

Position Held in the Agency

The positions held by individuals in the agency, the responsibilities they carry, and their status in the administrative hierarchy, represent a third important factor in the composition of groups. Status, as it is attached to individual members in a group, may be of two types, the official or structured status which individuals have by virtue of their positions in the agency and the unofficial or personal status which is bestowed upon particular individuals by the group because of their liking for them, respect, awe or other qualities which may give prestige. In terms of the factors which influence the formation of training groups, the former type of status concerns us at this point.

The official status of group members may affect their conduct in the group and the conduct of other members toward them. In the public welfare agency, in two situations in particular, the official status of group members may have an impact on the learning process. They are (1) the inclusion of staff members and their immediate supervisors in the same group and (2) the combination within the same group of staff members from many levels and types of responsibility.

Supervisor-supervisee combinations

Probably foremost among the problems public welfare agencies encounter in forming groups is the difficulty in reconciling the achievement of educational goals with the membership of the group. Where educational goals are specifically aimed at meeting the needs of a particular staff group in the agency, membership should be limited to staff in that category of position and other members should be added only when this contributes to the specific aims of the group.

Some difference of opinion exists, in the formation of training groups,

⁶ Grace L. Coyle: *Social Process in Organized Groups*. New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930. xiv, 245 pp. (Chapter III).

as to whether or not staff members responsible for supervision of those for whom the activity is primarily planned should be included in the group. Since the focal point of the staff member's learning and performance is in his job and the knowledge he acquires in the group needs to be integrated through application on the job, often agencies assume that this can best be accomplished by adding the respective supervisory staff to the training group. However, since the primary goal in group training activities is to add to the knowledge and skills of the members through a positive educational experience, conditions surrounding the formation of the group must be favorable to learning. At times the addition of supervisory staff to a training group planned for their own supervisees can block the learning process. No matter how favorable the circumstances, the factors of status and authority which such a combination of staff automatically brings with it will unquestionably affect the group's functioning in one way or another. That supervisors should be familiar with the educational content developed in such meetings is a foregone conclusion. But the question is how this can best be achieved with maximum benefit to both groups.

The presence of his superiors in the group does affect how the individual thinks, feels, and acts whether he is aware of it or not. The results are not always negative, of course. The presence of higher status representatives to whom the members of the group are administratively responsible might at times stimulate the group to a more animated and creative discussion through the interest and contributions of such representatives, or they may relieve the group's anxiety by their own behavior and identification with the problems under discussion.

The most frequent pattern of supervisor-supervisee combined membership occurs in groups made up of caseworkers and their immediate supervisors. This type of grouping can create more acute problems because of the nature of the learning process at the practice level of responsibility. There is usually more insecurity in learning at this point and casework practice is more fraught with the possibility of exposure of individual performance than is generally true of the supervisory and administrative processes. When a supervisor-supervisee combination of staff occurs at a higher level in the agency, the "social distance" between supervisor and supervisee is apt to be much less and therefore less anxiety-producing, because of the greater uniformity of training and experience in such a group and the professional and personal fortification which comes with being higher in the hierarchy. Even in such groups, however, it is not always possible to avoid feelings on the part of group members of insecurity, a sense of being evaluated, a need to prove themselves, or a passivity borne of anxiety.

The following example from agency experience points up some of the ways in which the educational process may be impeded or entirely blocked because of a destructive status problem in the training group. This group was made up of county caseworkers and their respective county directors from five counties. The directors carried a direct supervisory responsibility for the caseworkers because of the smallness of the local staffs. The training sessions

were planned to deepen understanding of the service aspects of the job and to help county staffs understand and put into practice a revised section of the public assistance manual dealing with eligibility in the aid-to-dependent children program. The training material was directed toward the caseworkers, but the leader was well aware of the directors' need to learn and understand more about casework skills. The following excerpts are taken from the leader's observations of this group. While the excerpts are lifted out of a great deal of surrounding material, they are complete enough to illustrate the problem under discussion here:

At the first meeting, the two women directors seated themselves among the caseworkers. The three men directors took seats at the front of the room. As soon as the leader opened the discussion, the three men plunged in. One started telling how the program was handled in *his* county; the other two each countered with the better way in which it was handled in *their* counties. The leader tried to get to more general material and draw the caseworkers in but the back-and-forth conversation among the directors made this difficult.

At the second meeting, two of the men directors persisted in arguing about eligibility until the leader broke in, trying to summarize and pull out some principles the group could agree on without putting the directors in too difficult a position. The rivalry between the directors played into the difficulty the leader had in making the caseworkers feel free and comfortable in discussion in a group which included their directors. When the directors got into a "back-and-forth" type of discussion, the caseworkers sat back—an interested but non-participating audience.

This split between the caseworkers and the directors was accentuated in the second meeting by the somewhat authoritative manner of the directors. When the group was discussing what should be covered in the first interview with a client, one of the directors told with obvious approval of a plan being tried in another State where workers are graded according to whether they cover all items in their record of eligibility determination. They are given a second chance, but if they don't measure up, they lose their jobs. The leader tried to pass this off humorously, indicating how fortunate it was we lived in another part of the country, but Mr. K insisted he thought it was a good idea. The caseworkers reacted to this a little defensively, bringing out the problem of trying to record *everything*. Miss T spoke up to say that if you spend much time in the office working on recording, "you're criticized for *that*." Mr. P, one of the county directors, gave quite a little talk on how every worker should take fifteen minutes a day to review part of the manual. In the intermission, the caseworkers expressed their resentment about this, pointing out that it's easy for the directors to say this, but when do caseworkers have any time for reading the manual?

When the group gathered for the fourth session, none of the men directors were present and the group almost visibly relaxed. They joked about its being "ladies day." The meeting was to be chaired by one of the absent directors, so the leader suggested that the group choose a caseworker to substitute for him. The group selected Miss G. The caseworkers "blossomed out." On the whole, this was one of the most successful sessions from the point of view of group participation and lack of tension.

The official status of the three men directors in this instance was only a part of the problem. Their own personal drives and emotional needs entered in to make their behavior disturbing. Had they not held positions of authority

in the agency, however, they probably would not have felt they could assert themselves to the extent they did, nor would the group have been so permissive in letting them do so. The leader's observations indicate that the disruptive influence of the competitive strivings for prestige on the part of the men directors prevented the leader from presenting material and certainly prevented the caseworkers from participating actively. In addition to this, the directors' behavior was such as to arouse feelings of resentment and hostility in the group, feelings not conducive to good group morale and interest.

True, a training program could not have been developed for the caseworkers in these counties to the exclusion of the county directors, but to continue with meetings at such a destructive and non-productive level would certainly not meet the agency's needs. In this situation, for example, it would have been more profitable to plan a series of meetings separately for the directors in which the material to be presented to the caseworkers could be taken up and related specifically to their supervisory responsibility for the integration of it on the job, thus giving them status in their own right and freeing the caseworkers for a learning experience.

Where staff in higher status positions are not really qualified to carry their responsibilities, as may have been the case in this instance, their behavior in a group composed of their subordinates may take the form of resistance, expressed either through aggression or silence. The educational problem here is one of working out approaches to the two groups of staff separately, but with carefully coordinated goals. If a series of separate meetings for the county directors could not be held in this instance, the impact of such destructive influences as those illustrated here might have been reduced by having a separate meeting with the directors preceding the training sessions for staff to acquaint them with the material, and another immediately following to help them tie the training material back to the job. Such meetings might serve to make the directors less aggressive in the group with their own staffs and might give them more security in participating constructively.

In groups made up of supervisors and their supervisees, it is often difficult to separate the educational content from the administrative, particularly if the group leader is not skilled in keeping the meeting educationally focused. In such situations, it is easy for the members to lapse into the "administrative relationship" and to have supervisees looking to supervisors for "the answers." For example, we have all been in groups where supervisory or administrative personnel have been drawn into, or have voluntarily leapt into, a discussion of the merits of a specific case or agency policy in such a way as to shift the focus of the session from a discussion of social work principles to a preoccupation with an isolated situation.

A group that has been trying to move toward an understanding of concepts or general principles finds it very disconcerting to find itself suddenly having to make detours around the specifics injected by such contributions. This is quite a different matter from using such a group member as a resource person to clarify or amplify a particular policy or situation in order to enable the group to proceed with its discussion. It stands to reason that the temptation

to use an educational situation for administrative clearances is greater when persons who can supposedly give the answers are at hand. If members from staff at higher levels are included, the group as well as the leader must have a clear understanding of the purpose in so doing and act within that purpose.

From the point of view of learning, we may have to look more critically at the assumption that supervisors who are directly responsible for the professional supervision of individual members of a group should also be present as members of the group. Those responsible for the individual teaching of staff must know what other educational experiences their supervisees are engaged in and how they are utilizing them if integrated teaching and learning on the job is to take place. Can this best be achieved through combining supervisors and supervisees in the same training group? Or are there other ways which could result in more productive learning for both?

Sometimes we assume that by including supervisors in training activities planned for their supervisees, through some sort of osmotic process they will be able to integrate what their supervisees are getting in the group with their supervision of them on the job. Educationally we know this cannot happen in this way, simply because an important intermediary step must be taken between what is taught in the group and what is taught in individual supervision. In the group, the supervisor undoubtedly becomes acquainted with what is taught and may even observe certain learning problems of his staff, *but the major question is one of helping the supervisor relate the training content and the educational goals specifically to his own responsibility as a supervisor-teacher.* This involves another dimension, another set of skills which must be worked on with the supervisors independent of their supervisees. Often this step is omitted. Frequently in our attempt to achieve this intermediary step, we add supervisors to a training activity planned for a supervisee group.

We need also to take an honest look at other factors which enter into a decision to combine supervisees and their supervisors in a training group. Status can be a governing one in some instances. The more insecure the supervisor, the more need he feels to be present when his supervisees are being taught by someone else. His feeling of not knowing what is going on and of being left out of something which directly affects his staff can be a powerful motive in his rationalizing attendance at such meetings. Individual supervisors with such unconscious motivations are bound to influence group interaction negatively. Interestingly enough, the mature, professionally skilled supervisor who is secure in his teaching and would in all probability make a rich contribution to the group, also feels less personal need to be there.

Another point requires mention here. Some words, through use and association, take on a certain "goodness" or "badness," and "authority," is assuredly one of these. Authority has somehow become equated with that which is unpleasant or controlling, something to be avoided at all costs in both personal and professional relationships. Some of this attitude creeps into the problem of who should be included in staff training groups and affects our objectivity in looking at the problem. Authority, when looked at apart

from the culture which surrounds it, is a necessary and useful part of our social institutions. In the administration of social agencies, it has a definite place. The degree of "goodness" or "badness" with which it is used will, of course, depend on the individuals using it.

In planning educational groups, our goal is to insure that learning takes place in as positive and effective a way as possible. We know that authority as a built-in aspect of agency positions will accompany the people in those positions when they attend a group. The behavior of those individuals in relation to the authority of their positions is an important point. A. Delafield Smith says this very well in his book *The Right to Life*. "But it is not working in an authoritative setting that prejudices professionalism. Rather it is the *exercise of authority*. . . . It is being authoritative, not serving those in authority, that raises questions of compatibility with professional attitudes."⁷

The authority which is built into agency positions, even when used sensitively and without being dictatorial, will influence subordinate members of the group because of its sociological and psychological implications. Those responsible for forming staff groups should recognize that authority as represented by agency position, plus the cultural significance which gets attached to it by groups and individuals, are factors so fundamentally related to learning that they must be considered in the setting up of educational groups.

Still another point should be considered here in relation to the combination of supervisors and supervisees in the same training group. Why are we concerned as to whether these two groups of staff come together in the same meetings when they work together constantly on the job? This is exactly the point. The relationship on the job is primarily an administrative one which carries with it certain expected behavior on the part of both parties, while in the training group, the individual is in an educational situation which calls for a different use of himself and for different relationships with those around him, including the leader of the group. Unless the individual feels free in the learning process and is permitted to act as a learner rather than as a supervisee, his learning will not bring optimum results. Both the teacher and the learner are in different roles in the educational situation than they are in the administrative situation. When supervisors attend as members of the group, they and their supervisees may have difficulty in keeping the educational and administrative roles separate in their minds and behavior.

What can be done about this problem of including supervisory personnel in groups held primarily for the training of their staffs? The answer cannot be that it should always happen or that it should never happen. Rather it lies in making an educational diagnosis, as well as in estimating comparative learning potentials in each situation. Perhaps what should be said here by way of clinching the point is (1) that the combination in the same group of persons in positions of authority with persons responsible to that authority, has inherent in it certain liabilities which will affect group interaction and

⁷ A. Delafield Smith: *The Right to Life*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955. 204 pp. (p. 187).

consequently group and individual learning; (2) that it may be possible through other means, to achieve the goals of continuity in learning and optimum educational results for the learner.

The experience of one training supervisor in experimenting with a way of handling this problem is particularly applicable under the last point. In this instance, a series of six orientation sessions was planned by the State office for a group of four new county directors, all men, each of whom was responsible to a different field representative in the State. Having four field representatives present at all meetings and in numbers equal to that of the membership of the group itself was obviously inadvisable. The training supervisor saw this as an opportunity to test out an idea which he hoped would achieve the desired objectives without combining field representatives and county directors in the training sessions. He held several meetings with the field representatives to review the individual needs of the new directors for orientation and to plan the training sessions. Preceding the group sessions, a plan of individual orientation with the directors had been carried out by each field representative, and the group meetings were developed as a continuing part of the whole orientation process.

The field representatives "joshed" a little with the training supervisor about "monopolizing their boys," but they supported the idea of having them meet with the training supervisor alone, partly because of the realities in the situation, but also because they could see some values in the educational plan as worked out. The diversity of educational and personal backgrounds of the county directors, even though only four in number, and the fact that none of them had been identified in any previous capacity with public welfare programs or philosophy, required that the focus of the group meetings be kept on the development of some understanding of social concepts and the basic philosophy of public welfare programs, leaving to individual field visits by the field representatives, the specifics of the agency's operation. This particular focus in the group discussions, as observed by the leader, made it even more important for the members to feel free to express their personal concerns and biases in areas which had a high degree of emotional involvement for them.

These directors had good working relationships with their field representatives and any reluctance they may have felt with them present would not necessarily have been related to them as individuals. But under such circumstances, by being removed from the immediate administrative line of responsibility, the individual is allowed a more impersonal expression of feelings and anxieties. In this case, the leader felt the directors used the group meetings quite differently than they would have done had their field representatives been there. Although they recognized the training supervisor as a representative of the State office, in their minds he was not as intimately involved with the agency's operations, and consequently they felt freer in criticizing some of the State procedures and policies and in bringing in ideas and "slants" which they had acquired by way of the "grapevine" around the State. The leader thought that the county directors would not have opened up to this degree if the "State" had been administratively represented in the group.

The directors often referred, during the course of the meetings, to their respective field representatives, telling how helpful they had been on the job and relating the discussions back to their respective county problems. Apparently they understood the relationship of the two sources of professional help very well. To them the group represented a more "private" learning experience, in a sense. This was particularly meaningful to them because they were new to the agency and the field and were experiencing many "shocks" in their adaptation to a new way of life.

The plan to make these group sessions a part of an integrated experience for the county directors was carefully followed through. The training supervisor provided the field representative with a full written report of each meeting, stressing especially the professional development and problems of the individual directors. The field representatives stated they had a better idea of the progress and problems of their directors through the training supervisor's reports than if they had been present in the group themselves. One county director, for example, apparently was going through a very traumatic experience in trying to change his attitudes of a lifetime. But despite years of living with his prejudices, he was apparently anxious to succeed on the job and gave every indication of wanting to change. The training supervisor recognized the training group was a rough experience for him and that he would need a great deal of individual support on the job. This was relayed to his field representative who picked up immediately where the group experience had left off.

The field representatives attended the final session of the group, and at the conclusion of the series of meetings, the training supervisor and the field representatives re-evaluated the project and planned next steps for the county directors, both individually and in relation to a possible later series of meetings on the administrative aspects of the directors' jobs. The educational results with this group of county directors were unusually good and their understanding of themselves and the agency was apparently increased. The benefits to the field representatives were perhaps even greater because of the experience of working with the training supervisor in an analysis of the learning experiences and further educational needs of their directors.

Where a supervisor-supervisee combination of staff exists in the same group, certain interactions deriving from this relationship can be expected to appear in the group. The possible influence of such interactions on the learning process must be understood by the leader. Where problems of status or authority arise, the leader has the task of holding to the objectives for which the group was formed and handling the problem in such a way that a satisfactory educational experience will result for those in attendance.

Combinations of several staff levels

A second problem which sometimes appears in relation to position in the agency and educational goals grows out of the wide geographical spread of staff in many areas. In a large rural area where there is not enough staff in any one category to warrant separate meetings focused on the needs of the

various staff levels or functions, training meetings may have to include all professional staff in the State or portions of the State.

Reconstructing one such rural group described by a State agency, gives us an excellent opportunity to see these factors at work. This was a group of ten, consisting of the total professional staff in one-half of a large rural State. The group had the following identifying characteristics:

Sex: one man and ten women.

Position in the agency: three public assistance workers; one child welfare worker; four county directors; one State field representative and one State child welfare consultant (group leader).

Two of the county directors represented the only staff in their respective counties and therefore carried combined duties of caseworker and administrator. One county director supervised three workers (two public assistance and one child welfare), thus combining the duties of supervisor and administrator; one county director supervised one worker and carried a partial caseload, thus combining the duties of caseworker, supervisor and administrator.

Education and experience: all members except the State office representatives who were professionally trained, had partial or full undergraduate education but no professional social work education. Experience ranged from one to two years for the caseworkers and from six to ten years for supervisory and administrative staff.

When studied as a problem in the execution of a staff development program, the above combination of factors requires careful analysis. The group represents two agency programs (public assistance and child welfare); four levels of administrative responsibility (caseworker, supervisor, administrator, and field representative); three staff functions (direct service, supervision, and administration) with the added complication that all of the county directors carry multiple function responsibilities. All of these factors would have to be taken into account in arriving at training goals, since membership was predetermined by the circumstances. Given such a group, what might be done to reconcile the nature of the membership with educational goals which would have value for the agency?

Probably one of the greatest problems in this type of situation is that the training supervisor may be so baffled by all the different needs represented in the group, that he feels stymied in working out the educational goals in a very definitive way. As we look at the job responsibilities carried by individual members in the above group, we find that seven of the ten carry direct casework responsibility, either as a full- or part-time assignment. Two members, the State field representative and the child welfare consultant, would not be considered part of the core group, since they were there in administrative and leadership capacities. For this group, meetings focused on areas of direct service to clients in public assistance and child welfare programs, with appropriate attention to where the group is in its professional development in these areas, might represent educational goals consistent with the needs of the group.

But the examination of the group's membership in relation to educa-

tional goals cannot stop with this somewhat over-simplified observation of the problem. Other factors are at work in a situation of this kind which must be taken into account in deciding whether the common denominator of casework services can offer an effective learning experience for a group made up of such a cross section of staff responsibilities. For one thing, for those already in supervisory or administrative positions, having to attend training sessions to learn casework skills, even though casework practice is a part of their job responsibilities, may precipitate feelings of inadequacy, resentment, or rivalry. To admit to the need for learning casework skills in a group of peers is one thing, but to become a learner in this area jointly with their supervisees might easily inject status problems which would affect educational goals.

This still leaves the question of how the members carrying supervisory or administrative responsibilities are to get help in developing their knowledge and skills in these specialized areas. Obviously attention could not be focused on these areas in such a heterogeneous group. If combined meetings of this type are the only ones the supervisory or administrative staff have an opportunity to attend and the nature of the group's membership requires that training content be focused at the direct service level of operation, it means that the supervisory and administrative staff are also held educationally at this level. The knowledge and skills required of them as supervisors and administrators, so essential to the proper implementation of the casework services for which they are responsible, often do not get specialized attention in the consideration of training goals.

Unfortunately, in too many instances, the supervisory and administrative staffs are themselves still in the learning stage with regard to the knowledge and skills of casework. Any plan to include them in a group of caseworkers may provide a way of learning such content intellectually but from an educational viewpoint, it has psychological limitations since there is no accompanying plan for application through supervised casework practice. Also at some point the knowledge and skills required of them as supervisors or administrators must be taught. Granted that some of this learning takes place on an individual basis through the help of field supervision and consultation, group meetings on the problems and skills of supervision and administration have distinct educational advantages. Even where an agency is faced with the very realistic problem of scattered staffs and limited travel funds, planning on an alternate basis for meetings focused on casework and meetings planned specifically for supervisory and administrative staff will pay dividends. The same proposal as that made for the combination of supervisor-supervisee groups would also be useful here, namely, planning separate sessions with the supervisory and administrative staff before and after the regular sessions of the total group to work with them on how the content presented could best be integrated with their particular responsibilities.

At times, group membership may cut across all of the agency's staff functions and levels of operation but with a specific objective in mind. The best examples of this were groups organized to interpret and plan for the implementation of new State programs or Statewide changes in organization

or policy. The goals for these groups were not inconsistent with the variables in the membership, since all members, whatever their position, were starting at the same point in learning with regard to the content presented. Subsequent planning, however, would have to provide additional opportunity for supervisors and administrators to work on their problems in relation to the integration of the new knowledge and policies within the daily work of the staff. Bringing large numbers of combined staffs together in meetings of this type on the assumption that presentation of material is in itself enough to insure its incorporation by staff as part of their thinking and doing on the job is highly questionable.

Other subject areas lend themselves to study by groups composed of combined staff levels without creating a status problem. One such group reported on by a State was concerned primarily with strengthening public relations between the agency and its large rural community, together with the ways in which the staff could plan and execute an effective program of interpretation. Such a theme would respond well to a united staff approach through group sessions on the "know-how" and skills necessary to conduct such a project successfully.

The formation of groups for training purposes presents some extremely complicated, and at times insoluble, problems for public welfare agencies. Certain principles, however, can be applied in the establishment of groups for educational purposes. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Selection of membership must be related to the educational purposes of the particular group.
2. Educational objectives are more effectively achieved if certain criteria of homogeneity are selectively applied in relation to the educational goals to be reached. These will vary, but basic among them are education and training, experience, seniority, function, position, individual capacity, and level of professional development.
3. When members are added to the group who have a direct supervisory or administrative relationship to the "core" members, the purpose of their attendance must be clear to them and to the group. In such instances, the educational goals established for the original group cannot serve the educational needs of both levels of staff, since goals will be different.
4. Public welfare agency programs call for skills in several specialized areas, notably casework practice, supervision, and administration. Groups should be formed so as to permit concentrated attention to the learning of the particular knowledge and skills required in these positions. To be most effective, such groups should be homogeneous in character, in the sense of being set up by function and level of responsibility.

Development of Group Goals

Group goals within the framework of this approach are synonymous with educational goals. This definition excludes from consideration certain

other types of goals which may exist in formally organized groups. Training groups are not action groups, either in the sense of taking action as a group on particular issues or of making decisions about individual cases, although educational dividends may accrue from such types of group sessions.

The educational focus of training groups calls for a group process and group goals directed toward helping the members increase their knowledge and skills in particular areas. This must be accomplished in such a way that general principles emerge and become vehicles for the transfer of learning to other situations. The goals, the process, and the leadership of educational groups have quite different characteristics from those of administrative groups, yet in the agency setting this distinction is not easy to keep clear because "members" and "leaders" are involved interchangeably in both types of groups. Educational and administrative roles can be confused when supervisors or administrators attend groups with their supervisees. The same point applies when supervisors or administrators are called upon to carry a part of the training function in leading their own staff groups. For example, a staff member with administrative responsibility for a group of workers or supervisors who meets with them regularly in administrative meetings and also from time to time conducts meetings set up for training purposes, may have difficulty shifting from the role of administrator to that of teacher. The group also may have difficulty behaving as though these two roles and the purposes of the two types of meetings were different.

When line supervisory staff carry responsibility for training sessions with their own staffs they can experience real difficulty with their teaching role unless they make a conscious effort to provide an educational experience for the group. If the supervisor is a good teacher in his individual supervisory contacts with staff, they will recognize and respect these same qualities in his group teaching. If on the other hand his daily supervisory practice is conducted at an emergency tempo with a question and answer technique predominating, the staff's use of the group learning situation is apt to follow the same pattern. Even when the supervisor is a skillful teacher, however, he needs to employ specific tools, the use of which will enable the group to separate themselves for the time being from the specifics of the day-by-day job and will provide the group teacher with a professional structure to assist him in holding to an educational focus. These are the tools discussed in earlier chapters—a continuous assessment jointly with the staff of their progress and educational needs, the definition of clear teaching objectives, the development of content, materials, and experiences best calculated to realize the objectives, and an on-going integration of group with individual learning. These steps must actually be developed in writing and over a period of time should constitute a continuous and progressive practice curriculum for the particular staff group.

The concept of educational diagnosis applied in the agency setting requires several methods of approach in determining goals. There are the immediate and the long-range training goals to be considered; the question of which goals can best be achieved through individual supervision and which through the group method; and basic to both of these approaches, the major

consideration of what content is to be developed and taught in relation to specific job responsibilities in the agency. Diagnostically, educational goals must also be concerned with the stage of development of the agency itself, its staff members individually, and its staff groups. Tyler's four fundamental guides for determining goals—the educational purposes to be attained, the educational experiences to be provided, the effective organization of such experiences, and an evaluation of how adequately the goals have been attained—must also be applied and reapplied as educational goals are shaped and reshaped.

A set of criteria developed by Cartwright and Zander⁸ in relation to the effectiveness of goals, extend the consideration of goals beyond their formation to their influence throughout the group's life, and constitute a helpful backdrop for the discussion which follows.

The effectiveness of group goals is determined by:

1. Extent to which a clear goal is present.
2. The degree to which the goal mobilizes energies of members behind group activities.
3. The degree to which members are in conflict concerning which of several possible goals should control the activities of the group.
4. The degree to which members are in conflict about the means the group should employ in reaching its goals.
5. The degree to which the activities of individual members are coordinated in advancing the groups tasks.
6. The extent to which needed resources are available to the group, whether they be economic, material, legal, intellectual, etc.

These criteria become more specific when viewed in the light of actual group experiences. The experiences of State agencies not only reflect certain problems in relation to goals, but also indicate some positive ways of avoiding or meeting these problems. The factors selected as having particular bearing on the development of training goals are (1) determination of educational needs; (2) agreement in goals; (3) avowed and unavowed goals; and (4) training content in relation to goals.

Determining educational needs

The process of determining the educational needs of staff must be a systematic one. The various administrative tools discussed previously should be brought into play constantly and in varying combinations in order to assess accurately where the staff, as a whole and in its respective parts, is in its development.

Individual supervision is, of course, the chief point of departure for the identification of educational needs. The relationship between individual and

⁸ Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (editors): *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1953. 642 pp. (p. 305).

group educational needs is a very close one. No agency training group exists completely within its own boundaries. Each individual in it has professional ties back to a day-by-day responsibility which represents the hub of his learning. The development of educational goals for groups must take this into account and actually provide ways for learning to shuttle back and forth between individual supervision and group training.

Educational goals emerge out of individual educational needs. The opportunities established for achieving these goals involve both individual and group training. The overall educational goal of the agency lies in making these opportunities a continuous and progressive experience for the individual.

As Tyler points out, educational goals must not only define the subject area to be taught but must indicate the changes to be brought about in the learners as a result of the educational activity; in other words, in planning training objectives we need to think of two points on the educational continuum, namely, where the group is in its understanding at the time the training activity is contemplated and where the agency hopes the group can move to in their understanding of the subject through the learning experiences provided for them.

Training goals have two determinants which remain constant, though they are affected by time and growth. These are the agency's expectations in relation to quality of program and the stage of its staff's development in relation to these expectations. The agency's standards in themselves constitute goals. Training goals contribute to the achievement of the agency's overall goals through educational means.

How one agency was able to locate and determine educational need is well demonstrated by the following experience. A group of State field representatives, in planning a series of training meetings with local supervisors to prepare them for more effective teaching of their casework staffs, undertook a systematic study of the educational needs of the caseworker group in the agency. The field representatives conducted a three months' administrative review of their respective territories, gathering data on the basis of a schedule which they had drawn up to measure the caseworkers' performance in the establishment of eligibility for public assistance and in the quality of casework services to families in relation to problems other than financial. When the data was tabulated, the greatest educational problem was found to be the lack of understanding of family relationships and limited knowledge about human behavior. The method used by this State to determine the educational needs of caseworkers revealed what many agencies find in their approach to training problems, namely, that the survey led the supervisors and field representatives to recognize their own need for additional knowledge in these same areas. These areas of knowledge and understanding were not reflected in the practice of the workers primarily because the supervisory staff, themselves, were inadequately prepared in them.

The field representatives' workshop had been planned initially to help them develop skills in leading training groups of local supervisors with a view to improving the supervision of casework staffs. The results of the educational

survey, however, called for a shift in focus to take into account educational needs, previously unidentified, yet basic to the performance of the new skills the field representatives were engaged in learning. The workshop group decided at the end of its first session to concentrate on their gaps in knowledge about relationships and personality in order to strengthen the content they would be expected to teach the groups of supervisors with whom they would be meeting. Learning the skills of group leadership would avail them little if they did not have a thorough grasp of the content to be taught.

The sound casework principle of understanding where the client is in relation to his problem and beginning with him at that point to work on a resolution of it, has a useful parallel in educational activities. If educational goals are projected without knowledge of what the educational problem is and where the particular staff group is in its grasp of knowledge and skills, the educational content may be pitched far beyond where the group is or far below what they are capable of learning. Attuning educational goals to educational need is in itself a skill which we must learn more about in our planning of training programs.

Goals must be both flexible and specific. Though determined in the beginning by diagnostic criteria, they are subject to change as the group progresses or fails to progress. The County A staff mentioned on page 29 as needing a period of remedial help before joining a larger group is an example of the reconstitution of goals in the light of the group's stage of development. Originally, in that instance, the State office had set a standardized goal of helping county staffs to gain more awareness of the quality of program expected by the State in the administration of public assistance. After the second meeting, it was apparent that this particular group could not meet the educational demands being made on them. The leader, recognizing this, shifted his goals to a level more in keeping with the group's stage of understanding and capacity.

Goals are usually established with the hope of achieving them. Once goals are reached, others take their place. In other words, those responsible for developing training programs must have in mind a succession of goals. This is essential to maintaining a continuity and progression in the learning experiences of staff.

Agreement in goals

A group's educational goals may exist only in the minds of the planners and fail to get relayed to the members themselves. Members of a training group usually know in advance through agency announcements what subject is to be discussed; they may actually submit material from their experience for use by the group, yet still have little understanding of what is expected of them in terms of their own involvement in learning. Caseworkers going to an agency institute on "Casework Services in Public Assistance" or "Problems of Adoption," or supervisors attending a workshop on "Supervisory Skills" will have little idea of specific educational goals unless the preliminary communications to staff present these goals in a definitive way, emphasizing not only

what the subject is to be but what the agency expects to accomplish in relation to it.

Of course, one effective way of insuring an agreement on goals is to have the staff participate in the determination of their own educational needs. In one agency, a State committee made up of district supervisors and the training consultant was formed to study the training needs of local staffs in response to requests from them for help with casework services in public assistance. The committee approached this problem with a view to developing a plan that might reasonably be expected to meet determined needs for staff training. The committee arrived at training needs and method by considering the following:

Social service needs of the public assistance caseload (as outlined in agency manual).

Available resources for meeting these needs in the various localities, which, though predominantly rural, varied in cultural and social standards.

Agency administrative structure and function as determined by the need of the caseload and existing resources.

Size, location, qualifications, experience, and motivations of staff.

Total responsibilities carried by staff.

The training consultant reports that although in the beginning, the need for training expressed by the local staffs was in the area of services related to problems other than financial need, in the end, the committee decided the most immediate need on the part of the staff was to increase their skills in determining eligibility for financial assistance. By increasing the staffs' understanding of the implications of financial need and their more thoughtful use of eligibility requirements in the process of granting or denying financial assistance, the total caseload would receive more adequate service and the skill gained in this area could be applied to other problems.

The most effective method of accomplishing this training was believed by the committee to be a period of group training, consisting of a series of two-day institutes to be held at intervals over an indefinite period of time, with supervisor-worker conferences in the interim periods.

The committee's plan was presented to all district supervisors in three regional meetings and the rationale for changing the focus of the meetings was discussed. The plan was accepted by the local staffs and institutes were carried out on that basis.

This illustration points up several important things about goals in general, in addition to demonstrating a way of arriving at common goals. The five points considered by the committee represented a carefully thought out educational diagnosis of the staff situation in relation to educational goals. Although the requirements of the agency with regard to casework services in public assistance were defined in the manual of operations and thus represented the overall goals of the agency, the specific variables existing in local resources,

in agency organization throughout the State, in individual qualifications of staff, and in the overall demands on staff time were all essential to deciding where to start in helping each staff group with particular aspects of their job.

This experience demonstrates the importance of reaching agreement in goals. Local staff expressed a need for help in a particular area, namely that of providing casework services on problems other than those concerned with eligibility for assistance. The proposed change in emphasis was shared with local staffs and concurred in by them. By the time the institutes actually took place, the members of the various groups were well oriented to the purpose of the training sessions and both members and leaders were clear as to the goals.

The group goal can be an "inducing agent," a source of influence upon group members. Cartwright and Zander point out that the members vary in the degree to which they accept the group's decision, or the decision of others, concerning the group goal. Their research shows that the group members who most fully accept the group goal display the keenest interest in having the group achieve its goal; while those who merely acquiesce, make less effort. When a group goal is not fully accepted by the members, it has little power to influence their behavior. Under such circumstances, we find relatively poor coordination of effort and a high incidence of self-oriented rather than group-task oriented behavior.⁹ This is a particularly significant observation when applied to groups where the achievement of the objectives is essential to the overall goals of the sponsoring body, in this case the public welfare agency.

At times divergence rather than agreement on goals may exist between those responsible for planning the groups and those who attend as members. When this is the case, goals must be clarified and reconciled with the group before learning can progress. Sometimes such divergence occurs through failure to secure the staffs' preliminary participation and mutual understanding of goals.

Goals may conflict also as a result of difference of opinion between the members and the agency as to what these goals should be. This was vividly illustrated by a group of district supervisors for whom a series of workshop sessions was developed over a period of months with the objective of preparing them to become group leaders of training meetings with their own staffs. Originally responsibility for such training had been carried by training consultants on the State staff, but with a reduction in personnel, the administration decided to have the district supervisors of the State assume the training function as a part of their regular duties. Although this responsibility had always been outlined in the agency manual as inherent in the district supervisor's job, they had never been asked to carry it before. Even though considerable planning for the workshop was done in advance and the district supervisors had participated in the preparation for the meetings, "there was from the outset, real resistance." In nearly every instance, this resistance was

⁹ Cartwright and Zander, p. 315. See footnote, p. 87.

directed at having to assume responsibility for leading the district in service training meetings which were to follow the workshop meetings. Several members felt they had not been "trained to do training" and expressed real anxiety about having to undertake it. Others expressed concern that the agency did not have the funds to engage "trained leaders" to conduct the district training meetings, so that district supervisors would not be called upon to do this.

In this situation, the divergence between the agency's and the members' idea of what the educational goals should be took the form of a vocal protest in the first meeting. Although the agency, for various reasons, had to hold to its stated objectives, the group's understanding and support of the goals had to be secured before any progress could be made toward a realization of them. The anxiety of the members about undertaking the training responsibility was well founded and had to be dealt with as part of the workshop process before they could accept the training objectives and engage themselves in learning how to become group leaders.

Planners and members must have mutual acceptance of the goals if the group's discussions are to take place in an atmosphere of harmony. Group members can disagree or differ in relation to many points in the group's deliberations, but if the group is to be effective, the basic objectives must be agreed upon at an early stage in its existence. Had the group of district supervisors and their leader each held tenaciously to their points of view, the workshop goals would have been defeated. But once the district supervisors were assured of support, they became intrigued with the idea of learning a new skill and common goals emerged.

Avowed and unavowed goals

Both avowed and unavowed goals affect the group's formation and functioning and must therefore be understood by the leader. Avowed goals are determined by the specific tasks to be executed. In some organized groups, such goals may be stated in the form of by-laws or a charter. In educational groups, avowed goals are in part predetermined by the legal base, program commitments, staff training needs, and public responsibility of the agency. Avowed goals are those formulated by the agency and known to the members.

Unavowed goals are conscious but unexpressed. They may exist in the minds of the leaders or the members of a group and be either positively or destructively motivated. Perhaps the most obvious of the unavowed goals present in training groups are those concerned with the satisfactions group members derive from coming together, meeting with one another, and enjoying the professional and social contacts made possible through group association. These goals though rarely expressed in a formal way are present in the thinking of staff members as they attend groups and are often consciously recognized by administration as essential to staff morale and stimulation. The spirit emanating from such contacts with co-workers and the sense of not being

alone in struggling with the problems of the job provide an esprit de corps in the group and help to facilitate the group's activity. These are highly acceptable and positive unavowed goals and are much needed for "group locomotion."

Individual members, sub-groups, or the entire group may have in mind conscious unavowed goals which are not directed toward the best interests of the group. Though these are not as apt to occur in groups formed for professional purposes, there is no guarantee of this. For example, the avowed purpose of a group might be a positively directed one, but various individuals or sub-groups may have the unavowed purpose of making the group serve their own personal need to attack the agency.

Unavowed goals also may exist in the minds of those planning the groups but not be expressed to the members because the time is not propitious. An agency might state the avowed goals but reserve some goals as unavowed because of the group's unreadiness to receive them at the time. One agency, for instance, felt concern over the destructive attitudes and prejudices of local county staffs in their dealings with clients. Although a change in the staffs' attitudes was a definite training goal, this goal had to remain unavowed. To have stated it directly to local counties would have been too threatening and might have reinforced their resistance to change. The avowed goal as stated by the agency was that of helping staffs to get a clearer understanding of the public assistance and child welfare manual provisions which had recently been revised. This provided a more impersonal basis for discussion and did not attack directly the individual attitudes of the members. The group leader had to keep in mind that ultimately the unavowed goal would need attention.

Goals which are unavowed to begin with may in the course of the group's discussions become avowed. This happened in the above group. As the manual was discussed, the members brought out strong biases, for example toward the "absent father" and illegitimacy. At this point the leader found it necessary to use a more direct approach to the examination of such attitudes and to help the group see the importance of changing them, or at least controlling them, in their work with clients.

Avowed and unavowed goals often exist simultaneously in the mind of the leader. This is quite in keeping with the educational responsibility he carries. Teaching progresses in relation to where the group is at any one time in its learning and the leader must not only be with the group but ahead of it, in the sense that he has projected goals which he has not yet shared with the group.

Goals may also be both unconscious and unavowed. Such goals will not be discussed here other than to indicate their importance. They are related, of course, to the unconscious need and motivations of individuals in the group and may appear in various forms. Fritz Redl¹⁰ points out that if the unconscious needs expressed in the group are not understood by the leader, he cannot really see *how* the group is functioning and may make a superficial diagnosis of

¹⁰ Fritz Redl: Group Emotion and Leadership. *Psychiatry*, 1942, 5, 573-596 (November).

the group. If the leader functions only on the level of the avowed purposes, he may be tripped up in his analysis and understanding of what is going on.

Content in relation to goals

Educational goals must be developed in conjunction with the subject matter and skills to be taught. In public welfare agencies, this raises some basic questions as to the nature of the educational content and skills required, their range and complexity. Although full pursuit of this knotty problem is beyond the scope of this publication, certain aspects of it must be considered in connection with the discussion of the goals of the educational process in the agency setting.

In recent years public welfare agencies generally have been concerned with determining what the public assistance and child welfare jobs consist of and what they require by way of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This problem is far from solved, since in large part its solution rests with the total social work profession.

Agencies have a two-fold educational responsibility—one which calls for providing staff who do not have professional education, the social work content, including skills, essential to carrying out their responsibilities; and another, which requires that staff members with professional education be taught whatever additional knowledge and skills are necessary to carry out specific program services of the agency.

One of the ways public welfare agencies have approached this problem has been to examine particular program responsibilities in an effort to identify the specific types of knowledge required to administer various services for children, the blind, the disabled, the aged, etc. In a more generic way, agencies have tried to determine what casework services should be given in public welfare programs and what casework skills are requisite to giving them.

Since we are concerned here to a considerable extent with large numbers of staff who are not professionally trained for their tasks, the agency must not only determine what social work functions are to be performed but what knowledge and skills must or can be taught on the job to enable staff to carry out the agency's responsibilities. The agency can in no sense undertake the functions of professional education. What then, can the agency teach? What are the possibilities and limitations in relation to training on the job? As a partial answer to these questions, let us look at the "givens" with which most public welfare social workers come to their jobs.

If the public welfare worker lacks the educational background which a college education of recent years provides, he may have a limited perception of certain social and economic values which constitute the foundation of public welfare programs. A positive social philosophy is an essential base for working in public welfare programs. Its acquisition is not necessarily equated with education, but an individual whose humanitarian impulses have been nurtured and matured through additional knowledge will bring a fertility of mind and spirit to his learning on the job.

Education and experience cannot be considered in isolation. The personal

attributes, attitudes, and capacities of the individual are an integral part of the requirements for productive learning, whatever his educational achievements.

The job responsibilities carried by child welfare and public assistance workers today require much more by way of professional knowledge and skills than can possibly be taught on the job. This must be recognized by agencies and their training staffs. The problem is to determine what knowledge and skills can actually be taught on the job in relation to the various types of positions and at what point agency teaching reaches its educational limits.

Agency limits are in turn determined by individual limits. Where social work staff are not college graduates, motivation toward professional training is difficult, if not impossible. Even those who are college graduates, may lack such motivation, or personal circumstances may prevent their seeking admission to professional schools of social work. For the group eligible for and interested in graduate training, the agency's only hope of equipping its staff to carry the responsibilities demanded of them is to encourage, and where possible finance, their enrollment in graduate schools.

Those who continue on the job but are not eligible for or interested in professional education will confront agencies with still another difficult problem. When a diagnostic assessment of staffs is in operation on a continuing basis and the problems of this group are identified, the agency may have to do some educational retooling and perhaps even make administrative adjustments in the responsibilities carried by these staff members.

A comparative look at professional education and training on the job helps us to understand better what agency limits are. The curricula in schools of social work offer students supporting theoretical material to the practice courses and provide other basic courses which give depth and understanding to field work experience. A constellation of courses, with the student at the center and with the focus on educational integration of knowledge and skills, is the academic goal. The agency cannot possibly offer all the necessary supporting courses, nor is this its objective. However, in working with children and their families, workers require some knowledge of how children grow and develop, their physical, social, and emotional needs and the meaning of relationships within the family. They must understand human drives and needs enough to interpret objectively the problems presented by people in financial want, with its accompanying emotional overtones. Caseworkers must also have sufficient knowledge about mental and physical illnesses to determine whether clients need referral to other agency programs or to outside community resources for specialized help. In carrying out public welfare casework services, these and many other demands are made on the knowledge and skill of staff.

The American Public Welfare Association has done some very helpful work on the identification of areas of knowledge and skill called for in the public assistance and child welfare worker jobs in public welfare programs.¹¹

¹¹ The Child Welfare Worker Job in the Public Welfare Agency: A Statement Prepared by the Committee on Social Work Education and Personnel. Chicago, Ill.: American Public Welfare Association, 1954. 7 pp. The Public Assistance Worker: A Statement Prepared by the Committee on Social Work Education and Personnel. Chicago, Ill.: American Public Welfare Association, 1952. 3 pp.

There are, of course, many areas of common knowledge and skill in these two programs and, in addition, areas more specific to the functions of each.

The common broad areas of knowledge and skill would encompass understanding of the legal and philosophical base of public welfare programs; understanding of social, economic, and cultural factors and how these affect individuals and families; understanding of human behavior as portrayed through the normal phases of growth and development, as well as in its disturbed or anti-social forms; knowledge of illness and its implications for the individual and his family; understanding and skillful use of the casework relationship in helping people; knowledge and resourceful use of community services on behalf of clients, etc.

In more defined program areas, additional knowledge and skill are required. In child welfare, the special nature of protective services, day-care services, services to unmarried mothers and their children, foster-care services, services in adoption, and other special needs of children call for special knowledge and skills on the part of staff carrying such responsibility. In public assistance, there are the particular skills related to the determination of eligibility for assistance, the abilities involved in helping clients toward a restoration of their self-reliance and self-respect, the skills essential in working with individuals and families to whom financial deprivation, disability, illness or a broken home has brought serious personal conflict.

Staff development programs are directed toward helping staff members acquire the requisite knowledge and skill through focusing on the agency's program, its objectives and services, its eligibility requirements, the use of community resources, and the skills needed in carrying out the services the agency provides. The individual staff member must learn how to use his knowledge of human behavior, and the social resources within the community best suited to the situation the client faces.

The caseworker with professional social work education will come to the agency with a well-rounded body of knowledge in these areas, but he will need help in its further integration on the job. For staff who have had no graduate social work education, educational limits must be prescribed by indicating that in some areas only partial knowledge and understanding are required. This educational process is further delimited by focusing the acquisition of such knowledge and skills on the agency and the caseworker's job. There is the hope that more and more caseworkers will come to agencies already having acquired this background through professional education. This range and depth of knowledge is a large order for staffs who have not had the benefit of professional training. For this group, the primary question is what and how much of this content should be taught within the limitations of the agency setting.

Only more intensive study of the problem by the field as a whole will enable us to answer this question of the content of social work practice adequately. In the meantime, however, certain self-imposed limits based on a diagnostically clear appraisal of staff needs and staff capacities may help determine what shall be taught and toward what ends. The blind spots we

sometimes develop in this regard are evident in the testimony of a case supervisor who was enthusiastic and proud of the eagerness and maturity with which a group of promising untrained workers seemed to respond to her teaching. She thought they displayed a high level of understanding, and was taken aback when they suddenly lapsed into earlier attitudes and showed by their behavior that they had not really understood and integrated the concepts she had been teaching them. This was, of course, no reflection on workers or supervisor. It was the inevitable result of "islands" of learning unconnected by causeways of supportive theoretical knowledge which could insure a wholeness in the learning experience.

The group of field representatives referred to earlier who had decided that the greatest lack on their part, as well as that of the casework staff, was in the area of understanding of human behavior is another example of this problem. In attempting to meet a need such as this where would we start and end? Perhaps one of the protective learning devices which can be employed in the agency in this regard is the use of a case as a teaching base. A case prescribes certain limits in the subject matter to be taught at any one time and thus avoids the overwhelming experience of the worker being confronted with a body of theory which is left dangling in mid-air. The knowledge acquired around each case is helpful, but not enough if the "islands" of learning are to be integrated with one another. But considerable integration of this knowledge can be achieved through developing educational goals in both individual and group training designed to draw from each case the general principles emerging from a study of the problem and its treatment.

The continued application of these principles in successive cases and the discovery of new principles in other cases can eventually build up a fairly substantial fund of knowledge for the staff member who must learn on the job, provided of course the educational goals are consistent with the level of education and capacity of the learner. For example, if untrained workers were confronted in a theoretical way with the complex and highly threatening concepts of ego development as part of a case discussion, irreparable damage might ensue. But if such workers are helped to identify the human needs and strivings revealed in the client and his family and to see that these exist in all personalities, including their own, this gives them a basis for understanding within the limits of their psychological awareness and enables them to make practical application to their cases.

As more workers acquire basic and comprehensive social work knowledge through attendance at schools of social work on a full-time basis and return to their agencies, the educational goals of the agency will shift more to providing opportunities for the integration and deepening of such knowledge and a continued refinement of skills. The agency will have responsibility for accelerating the professional development of such staff in preparation for greater responsibility in the agency.



INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS IN THE GROUP

ONCE THE PURPOSES of a group have been worked out and its composition determined in line with them, the group itself comes into being. At this point, a second major dimension in the group process comes into play—the interpersonal relations which form in the group and contribute to the collective behavior of its members.

Collective behavior is something above and beyond the sum of the individuals' behavior in the group. The group creates a new entity out of the activity, feelings, and relations of the members as they interact with one another.¹ The ways in which interpersonal relations emerge in a group are identifiable as distinct processes by which individuals become related to one another and around which the individuals become a group. These relationships form an intricate network of emotional patterns which shift constantly with the give and take of individual members with one another, with the group as a whole, and with segments of the group. Through interpersonal relations in a group, each member makes a contribution and takes something from the others.² This is an important process which can have profound influence on both the teaching and learning goals of the group.

The group meetings reported by State agencies provided fewer illustrations in this area of group functioning than in any other. Undoubtedly this was so because interpersonal relations in a group are so subtle and complex that leaders who do not have an understanding of the group process are less apt to observe and interpret them. One of the most difficult skills for the case-work-oriented leader to learn is that of getting the sense of the *group*, as well as thinking of the members of the group as *individuals*. It is largely through an understanding of the phenomena of interpersonal relations that we can begin to think of the group as an entity in itself.

The casework-oriented leader has at his command knowledge about individual personality and behavior that will stand him in good stead in his efforts to observe and evaluate behavior as it is expressed through interpersonal relations in the group. In addition, however, he must become aware of what

¹ Grace L. Coyle: *Group Work with American Youth: A Guide to the Practice of Leadership*. New York: Harper, 1948, viii, 270 pp. (p. 45).

² Course Outline for *Social Process II*, School of Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, September 1955. (mimeographed).

the existence of a group does to the behavior of individuals, of how interaction creates patterns which range from the simple to complex, from those capable of strengthening and enriching group life to those capable of destroying it. In discussing the illustrations included by group leaders in their reports, we will deal with them in such a way as to give the reader a conceptual awareness of their significance for group learning.

The problems of interpersonal relations reflected in the meetings recorded by group leaders were primarily in the areas of:

1. External factors which influence these relations
2. Status as a factor in them
3. Subgroups and their influence
4. Affectional ties between members
5. Emotional elements in individual behavior
6. Leader's role in working with the interpersonal relations in the group.

External Factors Influencing Interpersonal Relations

External factors are those which may operate in advance of the meeting to determine or influence interpersonal relations which emerge during the meeting. Some of these have been mentioned before in connection with the formation of groups.

Official status, the position the individual occupies in the agency, under certain conditions may create problems in the group. The fact that an individual possesses such status will not necessarily insure his acceptance in the group. Whether the members choose him as an individual on whom they wish to confer *personal* status depends on a variety of factors.

The official status of the individual can also influence interpersonal relations in other ways. This is particularly true where staff members from various administrative levels are present in the same group. The group member who represents a higher level of authority than other members of the group will attract certain actions and reactions because of this. Such interaction may be positive or negative; verbal or non-verbal; conscious or unconscious, but it will affect the interpersonal relations in the group in some way.

Prestige problems also may arise from members belonging to different levels of the same position classification in the agency. In one agency group, for example, the membership was made up of caseworkers from two classification levels and supervisors from two classification levels, each level representing different responsibilities and salaries. With the director of social services, who attended the meetings of this group, the constituency of the group represented five administrative levels. The leader reported that the members were noncompetitive, attributable in her opinion to the fact that they were professionally

trained, mature staff members, accustomed to meeting together. Under less favorable circumstances, such status factors could result in rivalry and feelings of difference.

The nature of this influence depends on the extent to which individuals merit their official status, their use of it in the group, and the group's acceptance or rejection of them personally as well as officially.

Sometimes the individual's own self-consciousness about his official status may further complicate the matter. For instance, when staff members and their immediate supervisors are together in the same group, we sometimes assume that if the higher status members are quiet and refrain from participation, any negative impulses in the group, attributable to the presence of authority figures, will be controlled. Unfortunately status, and the authority attendant upon it, are not so easily dispensed with, and ignoring them does not make them disappear. In their well-intentioned efforts to refrain from participation, in such instances, supervisors assign to themselves a role contrary to their status and one which might be misinterpreted by the group. When persons who obviously carry authority sit quietly by in the group, trying to behave as though they were not there, they may become suspect in the minds of the group members and find themselves rejected or feared as a result. The three male county directors in the preceding chapter assumed the exact opposite of a silent and non-intervening role with their caseworkers in the group. Somewhere between these two extremes, members with status can act appropriately in their role by exhibiting respect for the group's primary purpose, and also participating responsibly at needed points in the group's deliberations.

Prior relationships between group members is another external factor to be taken into account in evaluating interpersonal relations. In many agency settings some or all of the individual members in the training group will have known each other prior to the meetings. Some of these relationships may have been quite tenuous; others, well established. They may have been professional, personal, or both.

Prior professional relationships may exist on the basis of co-workers, or as supervisor-supervisee or other. The quality of such relationships will be reflected in the interaction of these individuals within the group and this, in turn, will be felt and reacted to by other members of the group. Prior personal ties between members can also affect the group. They may get further cemented or may even be threatened by the group, depending on the interaction which they precipitate.

If the outside personal relationship between members was a dependent-dominant pattern, the probabilities are that these individuals will behave in a similar way in the group. If the relationship reflected a long established personality clash, this is bound to show up in group interaction. In one group a running feud was continued by two known "enemies" with the more dominant of the two constantly opposing the other's viewpoint and on one occasion, openly ridiculing him in front of the group. While this behavior lasted, the group became "quiet and repelled" by the display of personal feeling based on a long-existent hostile relationship outside the group.

At times a relationship of the past rather than in the present, may reappear to influence group interpersonal relations. For example, the male administrator who at one time had been a student of a supervisor in the group or the staff worker who had been promoted to supervisor in another locality but attended meetings with her previous co-workers may reenact the previous relationship in the group or a new relationship may be formed based on the events which have taken place in the interim.

Where an outside relationship is one involving more than two people, it may appear in the group in the form of a strong subgroup with positive or negative motivation, as for example, a group of three caseworkers with seniority of twenty years in the agency who pitted themselves against their new county director of two years' standing. When any of these relationships develop in a group the interaction caused by them does not stay within the confines of relationships of the individuals involved, but spreads to the other members who in turn react to it.

The *urban-rural* composition of groups can be another influence in the way in which interpersonal relations develop among members. The differences in problems and outlook between urban and rural staffs can in themselves affect how people respond to one another or can induce the formation of subgroups. For instance, one leader reported some defensiveness on the part of rural agency staff who considered their offices too isolated for professional contacts and their community devoid of resources. This combination of staffs can also become a status-producing factor. Some leaders reported that people from urban centers found participation on a verbal basis easier than some of the people who came from smaller communities; that rural workers tended to underrate themselves and to think they were not as "good" as the workers in the metropolitan areas, simply because they were so isolated.

The element of sophistication also seemed to make for a self-conscious difference between these two groups of staff. Leaders were conscious of this and attempted to recognize and support the uniqueness of problems in both settings. They also pointed out that despite the dearth of resources in most rural communities, there were also some advantages in working in a less complicated community structure. Both urban and rural staffs may find difficulty communicating in a group because of differences in setting, culture, and administration. The leader's alertness and skill in recognizing these problems can head off serious difficulty and turn what might be a divided group into a united, mutually interested one.

Agencies reported that in orientation groups particularly, still another external influence was evident. The newness of the job and the fact that members with family responsibilities often had to be away from home for orientation courses seemed to create some anxiety in the early sessions. In one group, several members were away from home and on their own for the first time. In another group, some members who were housewives and mothers were not used to being away from home and were concerned over whether the temporary arrangements they had made for the care of their families would actually work out all right. In one orientation group, scheduled for a four-week

period, the agency made it possible for the trainees to go home on weekends, thus lightening anxiety over family situations. In another situation where staff members had long distances to travel to the meeting, the agency allowed a full day's travel prior to the meeting and a stay-over for the night following the close of the session. This brought people to the group rested and relaxed and prevented the meeting from breaking up prematurely because of early departures. In many instances where members came long distances, arrangements were made so several members could travel together. This establishment of interpersonal relations before members met as a group seemed to facilitate early interaction in the group.

That group leaders recognized the importance of helping the group to establish positive interpersonal relations is evidenced by the environmental devices used to bring this about. Many groups began with group members introducing themselves and one group reinforced this identification in the minds of the members by distributing a list of the people in attendance and their position and location in the agency. Coffee breaks, comfortable and informal seating, and suitable meeting rooms were all used in an effort to create an environment which would contribute to group morale and consequently to a positive beginning in establishing interpersonal relations.

External factors capable of influencing the quality of interpersonal relations and group deliberation can easily be overlooked because of their obvious nature, but they are important for agencies to take into account.

Status as a Factor in Interpersonal Relations

The development of status among members of a group occurs through the process of ranking or rating of individuals by the group. This process always bears some relationship to the type of group and to the nature of its goals.

In formally organized groups, such as training groups, the interaction among individuals, of which the ranking process is a major aspect, centers around the efforts and activities the group makes, or engages in, to achieve the purposes for which the group was called into being. In the formal group, interaction is functionally focused, that is task-centered, and is therefore relatively depersonalized.³ If a member cannot accept this general criterion as the basis of his behavior in the group, he will not be able to participate within the rules of the game. This focus on the task for which the group was created influences the types of roles or status which the group assigns to their individual fellow members. In an educational situation, this may mean recognizing a member of the group who has expertness in particular areas of the group's

³ Leadership and Authority in the Local Community. *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*, Summer-Autumn 1952. Vol. viii, No. 4.

task; locating a member who shows he is imaginative and creative in relation to the problem under study; or selecting a member skilled in clarifying and facilitating the discussion. One supervisor described such members as those having "a great sense of responsibility for agency functions."

The Ranking Process

In every group, rating or evaluation of members by other members is inevitable. This is not a formal or even a conscious process and is highly individual since each person in the group applies his own set of values in the rating process. "The members of a group usually arrange each other, as it were, perpendicularly. They 'rate' each other using in the process value scales often held in common so that a collective rating is reached on each person. This collective evaluation gives what we term status to each within the whole."⁴

One of the primary needs of any training-oriented group in rating its members is the special competence possessed by individuals in the group. The group draws on this competence to facilitate its discussion and problem-solving and in so doing attributes high status to such individuals. The personal as well as professional qualities of the individual with special competence are important factors in the group's acceptance of him. If he is well-liked as well as highly regarded, his contribution to the group can be doubly effective. But even though the group has no affection for an individual, they may continue to depend on him because of the nature and quality of his knowledge.⁵

Groups organized for training purposes are usually interested in accomplishing their goals and are consequently concerned with the quality of contributions made by their members, turning intuitively to those who can give the leadership the group needs. The selection of members on this basis is not, however, an uncomplicated process. A variety of potent factors may intervene. For one thing, a certain amount of ambivalence may center on the person who has special competence in relation to knowledge or skills which the group needs. On the one hand, the person assigned this role is liked because he is satisfying needs in relation to the task to be accomplished by the group. On the other, he may arouse a certain amount of hostility because his prestige is higher than other members. In this role he talks a considerable amount and his comments call for some agreement or commitment by the group which they may not be willing to give at the time. Whatever readjustments the members make in relation to the ideas expressed may produce minor frustrations, anxieties, and hostilities. These may become centered to some degree on

⁴ Coyle, p. 92. See footnote, p. 98.

⁵ Robert F. Bales and Philip E. Slater: Role Differentiation in Small Decision-Making Groups, in *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* by Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955. 422 pp. (p. 259).

the source which provoked them.⁶ The group may even withdraw some of the status they have given him as an individual and shift it to others in order to dilute the concentration of prestige and its potential for control.

The ambivalence a group may feel toward one of its members who is acknowledged to have status, is illustrated by the following group of county directors:

This group was made up entirely of persons without professional training and, in general, the members had little professional motivation to move them forward as a group.

Miss W was younger, both in years and experience, than other members of the group. She represented a much more progressive viewpoint than the others. Although she did not have professional training, she had read widely, attended institutes and conferences, and consequently had a much better grasp of emotional factors and casework concepts than most of the group. In the beginning sessions, the group recognized her superior knowledge and permitted her increasing prominence in the discussions. But with the motivation of this group at such a low level, the members could not tolerate too many new ideas or too much activation of their guilt at knowing so little. By the third session, the group was openly displaying its resentment toward Miss W. In turn, she became more tenacious about the role she felt justly belonged to her and took on a certain smugness which aggravated the group even more.

This situation illustrates the impasse a group can reach when it lacks indigenous leadership and cannot trust itself to become too dependent on one member, especially one who reminds them of their own inadequacies.

The needs of a group for certain types of knowledge may, on the other hand, result in the members seeking out other members even though the latter may be reluctant to be chosen. Mr. T, a member of a group of supervisors, was painfully shy and very reluctant to participate generally in the group. But even so, the group made him their specialist in relation to questions pertaining to child welfare since he was the only person in the group with such knowledge. Mr. T was knowledgeable and articulate on child welfare and the group respected and used his contributions. The status attributed to Mr. T in this group grew out of the importance of his contribution to its goals since both child welfare and public assistance supervisors were included in the group and a mutual understanding of programs, as well as knowledge of the supervisory process, was essential.

A second major need of groups with educational goals is locating individuals who can facilitate the group's discussion. Such persons play the role of an expediter, a member with skill in knowing when and how to underscore or summarize a point, when to ask a penetrating question or what to say to lift the discussion to a more productive plane. This ability involves not only saying the right thing at the right time, or pouring oil on troubled waters, but, at its finest, represents a reinforcement of the teaching process being carried on by the leader and accelerates as well as enriches the group's learning. As in

⁶ Bales and Slater, p. 297. See footnote, p. 103.

the case of the member with special competence, the facilitating skill of the expediter is enhanced when accompanied by qualities which enable the group to like and respect him, although here also he may hold his ranking in the group by virtue of his skill alone, since it is so essential to the group in reaching its goals.

The member who serves the group in this facilitating role is, by the very nature of his task, usually less conspicuous than the person who has status attributed to him because of his special competence. Consequently an attitude of ambivalence toward him is less apt to be aroused in the group. In educational situations, many of the qualities identified here as belonging to the facilitator role have been presumed to be those of the teacher-leader. Unquestionably the overall responsibility for coordinating, facilitating, and expediting the discussion rests with the leader, but a similar skill in members of the group can do a great deal to accelerate interpersonal relations and group interaction. The following excerpt from a record by a leader is an example of how a member can contribute to a group in this way:

Miss C was the indigenous leader of the group. She had submitted a conference with a student supervisor, for whom she was responsible, to be used in the discussion. The easy way in which she identified the material as hers made it possible for me to ask her to present some comments on it and to pave the way for others in the group to do likewise. She, of all the members of the group, had been most thoughtful about preparing for the workshop. For example, she had made a real effort to read the reference material which the leader had listed prior to the workshop. During the sessions, Miss C used the reading material in an appropriate way as if she had been thinking about it during her supervision on the job.

Miss C was ahead of the other members of the workshop in her knowledge and understanding. Several times she helped the group to move, when nobody else in the group was sufficiently secure or aware to do so. Undoubtedly she, herself, would have gotten more from being in a more advanced group; but on the other hand, the quality of her participation contributed greatly to enriching the learning of the total group.

The following are further illustrations of the assignment of roles to members with special competence or skill in facilitating group discussion, or who attract status by virtue of personal qualities.

A group of county staffs met regularly once a month for training sessions.⁷ The group representing one urban and five rural counties consisted of one man and six women, county directors and caseworkers. The indigenous leader who emerged in this group was the youngest in point of age of the whole group and occupied an agency position least calculated to command status among her colleagues. She

⁷ Helen H. Jennings in *Leadership and Isolation: A Study of Personality in Interpersonal Relations* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1950. xvii, 349 pp.) discusses the qualities which appear characteristic of the "over-chosen" and "under-chosen" members of a group. The illustration above is reminiscent of Jennings' qualities of the "over-chosen." Such qualities, including security to hold his own with authority figures, impartiality, impersonal attitude, willingness to listen to opinions, security in relationships, seeing himself in relation to the group, initiative and insight, are reported by Jennings to provide the bases for members of a group to be selected over and above the average for leadership roles.

was the director of the most isolated rural county in the group and worked alone without any casework or clerical staff. Within the group, however, she apparently had acquired a leadership role which had grown over the years and was well established and accepted by its members.

This county director served as spokesman for the group when one was needed. The group turned to her to verbalize their thinking and depended on her to carry the communication in the group between themselves and the field representative and child welfare consultant, both of whom were present at the meetings. The leader observed that the role assumed by this director facilitated the solidarity of the group and produced more general and active participation on the part of its members.

Undoubtedly the status of this county director in the group was due in large part to her ability to say for the members what they were unable to say for themselves, both content-wise and in their relationships with those in authority, namely their own field supervisor and a State office consultant. Since leadership by this director seems to have continued over many sessions, perhaps the group needed help in becoming more self-dependent. A group will sometimes lean heavily on one or two individuals when its members are insecure or anxious to present a good showing for some reason. When a group has been in existence a long time, as this one had, a leadership role may become fixed and actually discourage leadership elsewhere in the group. In fact, a complete absence of competition in such a situation may be symptomatic of apathy, lack of motivation, or basic insecurity on the part of members.

From the record, the professional role assigned to this director seemed to be accompanied by a personal liking on the part of the group, a fact which would contribute to the sustained duration of the role. Although her "privileged communication" with the higher status representatives in the group might easily have aroused resentment, apparently her role was carried out in such a way that the group felt secure about permitting it.

The problem always exists of maintaining a delicate balance between the leader's responsibility in the teacher role and the development and use of the various roles of group members who possess knowledge and skills of value to the group. Optimum use of these roles among the members can occur only if the leader is a secure person who can permit members "to shine" and yet not relinquish the responsibility which is vested in him as leader.

Before concluding this aspect of the ranking process, a word should be said about the group which assigns status to members for the purpose of defeating rather than achieving the group's purpose. This can occur in a group which is hostile to the leader or to the goals he represents. One such group of county

The "under-chosen," on the other hand, exhibit qualities which bring about rejection by the group to varying degrees. Jennings' research indicates a more frequent occurrence in the "under-chosen" of such characteristics as aggressive and dominant behavior, attention-getting behavior, behavior which tends to separate and draw individuals apart rather than to bring them together, poor quality of relationships and dependence on others for the solution of problems.

Two further points are stressed. The elements of choice or rejection are not firmly attached to individuals indefinitely. Either may shift with the circumstances. Nor is intelligence correlated with choice-status of individuals. Rather the basis for choice or rejection is related to personal and emotional factors.

directors was outspoken in its resistance to State office authority and to the implementation of public assistance policies. One of the members, Mrs. S, a self-appointed leader of the opposition, soon received the support and acceptance of her less courageous but equally hostile colleagues. She was outspoken and forthright with much more self-assurance than most of the group. She was also freer in expressing difference from the accepted casework viewpoint because of her seniority and reputation as a fighter. Many in the group held the same views as Mrs. S but relied on her to express them. Status which is awarded or usurped for destructive use is disintegrating to a group and to the individuals in it. The group must be helped to understand the source of the hostility and to deal with it, if the group is to survive.

Membership roles growing out of status based on special competence or ability to expedite the group's discussion are exceedingly important in groups with an educational purpose. The group will usually seek out those qualified to carry these roles. But what is equally important in terms of the group's effective functioning is the leader's understanding of the dynamics at work and his ability to utilize them to encourage productive thinking and learning.

The following situation illustrates the way in which members of a group can attribute status to a fellow member in relation to the personal and professional needs they seek to have fulfilled by him. In this group of newly appointed case supervisors, brought in from various parts of a State for a week's workshop in supervision, the factor that probably influenced the amount and quality of group participation the most was the urgency of their educational need. These members recently had been promoted to supervisory positions. They welcomed any assistance that would help them to get started in their new responsibilities. They also needed the comfort of being with others in the same boat and of being assured that with training and experience the skills of supervision could be learned.

Many of the men in the group were looking forward to promotion to administrative positions, so their interests were administratively centered. Mr. Y, because of his administrative background, represented status values to the younger men. They tended not only to accept him in the father role because of his age and manner but they also endowed him with status because of his particular experience. They "worked him over" thoroughly in sessions where the administrative aspects of supervision were discussed and informally outside the sessions whenever they could.

The leader described this group as "pretty well matched" for experience in supervision, meaning that all were new to the assignment. This undoubtedly placed on the leader almost the total responsibility for expertness in the skills the group was so eagerly seeking. Since all were new to supervision, no member in the group had special competence in that area, even though one member, Mr. Y, did achieve task-related status because of the interest in administration which existed in the group. Although all members were alike in being new to supervision, their past experience differed and this affected the ranking process.

This situation also illustrates the tendency within most groups to rank high those individuals who carry prestige, and it is important to understand

what meaning these people have for the group who creates them. Sometimes a group will "borrow prestige," as Miss Coyle points out, to increase its own stature. In choosing such prestige members, the group often selects those who exemplify figures of importance to them, as for example, the unconscious choice of a parental figure or someone who represents a professional ideal. The use the prestige-bearer makes of the prestige so bestowed is important. Some will use it to inflate their own egos; others to identify with the group and assist them in their task. The prestige-bearer, to be useful, must have the capacity to control his own emotional needs. He is also in a position to hold back the more aggressive members of the group and to protect others.

In any group, individuals will be found who are sought out by members as fulfilling high status roles. Others, probably constituting the majority, will fill intermediary roles of varying quality and intensity; still others will be rated by the group as making little or no contribution to its goals, even to the extreme of being the "underchosen" as Helen Jennings identifies them. Leaders need to understand what scale of values is being used by the group to rate its members. It may be quite different from the leader's and, as a consequence, he may be insensitive to the values placed on individuals by the group. This may lead him to miss important cues in the teaching-learning process.⁸

Subgroups and Their Influence on Interpersonal Relations

In staff training groups, subgroups may be those formed in advance through long-time association of individuals within a staff unit and those which spring up during the life of the group out of the psychological interaction among the members.

In the data submitted by agencies many instances were found of groups formed by bringing together staff units from several local offices. This procedure does not necessarily mean that such units will always constitute subgroups. Sometimes members, conscious of the inadvisability of being clannish, seat themselves with other staffs, go to lunch with different people, and in other ways integrate themselves into the group. Such behavior usually comes from mature, secure staffs. Other staffs may stick together, act virtually as one person in the group, and constitute a subgroup which stultifies interaction and discussion.

Of course, not all subgroups are negative in their influence. The members of a subgroup may operate as a team in the group, supplementing and complementing each other in such a way as to enrich the productivity of the group. One group leader pointed out that subgroups are sometimes "positive forces stimulating auxiliary discussions and exchange of ideas outside the regular sessions."

When subgroups become hostile, however, they can destroy a group

⁸ Coyle, p. 92-93. See footnote, p. 98.

by their subterranean activity. In one county staff training group, two members of the social work staff were critical of the director and chose every opportunity to undermine him with other staff. They would adjourn to the drugstore following each session of the group to gossip about the director and to disparage him before the younger workers. Their rationalization was that they were the only two in the agency who would stand up and fight. When personal interests or loyalty to a faction become more important than the goals of the group, disintegration is inevitable. In many such cases, members consider their relations to a subgroup of primary importance and have only a secondary interest, if any, in the goals of the total group.

Subgroups can form out of ethnic differences in the group. In one such situation, a subgroup formed around an ethnic group of four people who were reticent and unvocal. In addition to belonging to a different ethnic group from the rest, they came from an isolated rural area. The leader, learning of a special project for the aged in their home county, utilized this to draw the subgroup into more active participation. They were encouraged by the lively interest of the other members and participated more freely from that point on.

Subgroups may also form out of a difference in levels of training and experience. One leader reported that in planning her material, she geared it at too elementary a level, thinking this was what the group needed. Early in the session, she noticed that three or four members clustered in a group were much more sophisticated in their thinking and advanced in experience than the others. When a conflict of ideas occurred it usually centered in this subgroup and at times the leader had some difficulty in breaking through to include other members. These members also came to the rescue of the group, from time to time, when ideas were lacking. Subgroups of this nature are often quite characteristic of public welfare settings. The skill of the leader lies in making the educational experience worthwhile for them as well as for the rest of the group. The problem encountered here is a tendency on the part of a subgroup to have the group discussion maintained at their level of sophistication. On the other hand, with a group lacking experience and creativity, the presence of such a subgroup could be, as the leader indicated, a facilitating force in group learning.

More than one subgroup may exist in a group and if conflict arises between or among them, this can endanger the existence of the parent group. Sometimes this occurs when competitive staff groups come together from various local offices. These conflicts may be impossible to eliminate but the leader will need to try to bring the aims and activities of such subgroups into harmony with the broader group goals.

Affectional Ties in Interpersonal Relations

Affectional patterns which grow up in a group are based on personal preferences among or between members. These patterns differ in origin from

the ranking process which goes on around the group's task, but they can have an equally powerful influence on the interpersonal relations in the group.

The field of sociometry, represented primarily by Moreno and Jennings,⁹ has done a good deal of research in this area. They have identified certain familiar patterns such as pair relationships, triads or triangular relationships, the pattern which includes a central person with a group of followers, and others. They have used the term "social atom" to describe the study of any one person in terms of his relationships and influence in the group. The leader of any group needs to be sensitive to where these influences are so as to harness or redirect them in the interest of the whole group.

Affectional ties which are expressed in the group may have existed prior to the group's formation or they may emerge after the group comes together. Such relationships will not only be evident during the group's sessions but will carry over into social contacts outside the formal meetings. These outside contacts may in turn serve to reinforce the expression of affectional ties within the group.

Affectional ties grow out of highly personal relationships. They can have a positive or negative affect on the impersonal goals which the group as a whole is striving toward. The group of young men supervisors referred to several times previously felt affection as well as respect for Mr. Y, the older man to whom they turned for guidance. This relationship served as a propelling force in the group and added positively to the interaction of its members on the subject of supervision.

This same cluster of younger men also had other ties which contributed to group interaction—ties built up through experiencing similar family situations. All of them were about the same age, married and struggling with the problems of raising families on a relatively small income. Their drive to achieve administrative posts, one of the reasons back of their link to Mr. Y, was a part of their inner anxiety about family responsibilities. One of the group was going through a particularly difficult period—taking on a new job, finding a place to live, and planning for the arrival of a second baby. The others rallied around him, offered to help in various ways, and generally gave him comfort and support. This type of relationship not only can lessen the individual's feeling of pressure with the result that he is able to participate more effectively in the group, but also has a general morale value for the group as a whole.

Another member of this same group was extremely shy and the least articulate of the members. The group, sensitive to his discomfort, sought every opportunity to protect and encourage him. This protective sympathy of a group toward one of its members who needs encouragement or is struggling with a problem occurs rather frequently. In its positive form, this protective concern on the part of the group can serve as a liberating force for the individual, making it possible for him to grow in his experience. A group is equally capable, of course, of "ganging up" on a member who arouses their ire or

⁹ Jacob L. Moreno: *Who Shall Survive?: Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1953, 763 pp. and Helen Hall Jennings, *Leadership and Isolation*. See footnote, p. 105.

hostility. The leader's analysis of the affectional responses in the group clarifies for him the position of the inner circle and the relation of the isolated members to it.¹⁰ Jennings indicates that unless the individual establishes at least a minimum of person-to-person affection during his performance as a group member, he, as well as the others, will not be able to relax and feel at ease enough to give fullest application to the demands of the group.¹¹

The following group situation illustrates what is sometimes a fairly frequent occurrence in the group process, namely the existence of affectional ties and an accompanying subgroup pattern:

Miss F is the center of a very solid triumvirate, the other two being Miss M and Mrs. N, county directors from the two counties adjoining hers. She and Miss M are close personal friends and Miss N is only a little less closely associated with them. Miss J, the caseworker in Miss N's county is also one of this group, although with not quite equal status. Miss F is certainly the spokesman for this group of four. The others participate, but she is the leader.

In this strong subgroup of three, Miss J was apparently included from time to time in a fringe relationship. A "triad" is usually a highly fluctuating and inherently unstable relationship because of the tendency for the threesome to segregate into a *pair* and an *other*. In a triad, the third person may impinge upon the other two, as a mediator, a holder of the balance of power, or as a constant disturber of the solidarity enjoyed by the other two.¹² It is extraordinarily difficult, Simmel points out, for three people to attain a really uniform mood, but such a mood can readily occur between two of the group.¹³

Affectional ties often spring up in the group among members who have not known one another before. These relationships may have their source in a variety of motivations. Individuals bring to the group the totality of their personality patterns—their habitual ego responses, likes and dislikes, positive and negative feelings about people and ideas, the values they hold, and numerous other pieces of psychological luggage which we all carry wherever we go. Freud speaks of the "libidinal ties" which underlie all group relationships and indicates they are the force that holds the group together.¹⁴

Practically every group will have some members who remain isolates for various reasons. But most individuals when they come together seek out others they already know or begin a personal assessment of fellow members to deter-

¹⁰ Coyle, p. 93-94. See footnote, p. 98.

¹¹ Jennings, p. 298. See footnote, p. 105.

¹² Theodore M. Mills: Power Relations in Three-Person Groups, In *Small Groups: Studies in Social Interaction*. A. Paul Hare and others (editors). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955, 666 pp. (p. 428-442).

¹³ George Simmel: The Significance of Numbers for Social Life, In *Small Groups: Studies in Social Interaction*. A. Paul Hare and others (editors). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955, 666 pp. (p. 9-15).

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud: *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: Boni & Liveright, 1922. 134 pp.

mine who might have like interests, who might be "fun to know," who attracts affection because of appearance, personality, or behavior, etc. As these ties are formed, they immediately begin to be reflected in the group. The leader becomes aware of them through "knowing looks," mutual defense of one another's point of view, praise and respect for the other member, friendly banter between or among the members. Such relationships are necessary to the life of the group and help to form the internal process upon which the group is dependent for movement toward its goals.

Emotional Elements of Individual Behavior

In addition to the responses growing out of affectional ties which form in the group, interpersonal relations and the resulting group interaction have their origin in the personality patterns of individual behavior and their impact in the group. Grace Coyle speaks of the "role making of collective emotions,"—the emotional structure created by the abilities, interests, and drives of individuals—and points out that the collective results can be seen in dynamic currents and pressures on individuals, in esteem and stigma bestowed by the group on the individual, and in the place each member holds within the web of interactions.¹⁵ It is not only how the individual reacts that is important but what the group does in response to the various reactions of its members. Scheidlinger describes two factors as operating in this situation: the individual personalities in the process of interaction; and the group, though composed of individuals, as a dynamic whole in itself with its own climate and spirit, capable of effecting marked modifications in its constituents.¹⁶

From our knowledge of personality development as social workers, we are familiar with the various forms which behavior can take depending on the individual's basic personality patterns and the environment in which he lives. Since we never deal with the individual *per se*, but with the *individual in relationships*,¹⁷ these expressions of behavior as they are exhibited in the group must be evaluated within the context of the interpersonal relations in the entire group.

The emotional needs present in the group may be acted out in a variety of ways depending on the group climate at any one moment. Scheidlinger identifies the displacement of aggression as one of the most frequently noted processes in group behavior. He points out the danger which accrues to group morale from undue suppression of negative feelings. Frustration, he continues, engenders aggression and when it cannot be discharged against the frustrating

¹⁵ Coyle, p. 93-94. See footnote, p. 98.

¹⁶ Saul Scheidlinger: *Psychoanalysis and Group Behavior: A Study of Freudian Group Psychology*. New York: Norton, 1952. 245 pp. (p. 122).

¹⁷ Jennings, p. 298. See footnote, p. 105.

object, namely the leader, it is redirected (displaced) toward substitutes.¹⁸ In an educational group, frustration can stem from many sources. It may originate out of the personal needs of group members, or it can arise from factors in the educational situation itself such as poor leadership, unsatisfactory solutions to problems, inadequate data, or boredom.

The aggressive impulses present in a group can at times be frightening or paralyzing to a leader unless he has the skill to turn them to positive use or to dispel them. The leader must be able to take the hostility which inevitably develops to some degree in most group situations. In the learning situation particularly, individuals, as Charlotte Towle says, may release feelings of aggression out of anxiety over the learning demands made on them. And, according to Scheidlinger, aggression, whatever its origin, may get disguised or displaced. The leader not only has the task of handling aggression for what it is but also for trying to understand what is causing it so he can prevent its further intensification.

Sometimes group leaders have the misapprehension that the group itself can take care of the hostile member. If this is done constructively and without malice, such treatment can undoubtedly be effective, but if the group's response has a retaliating motive this can be a destructive and disintegrating force in the group. The leader has the very difficult task of keeping the group from becoming the victim of its own destructive impulses. The leader of one group described its membership as made up of two extremes, those who came to vent their hostilities against the agency and those who were looking for constructive resolution of their problems. The leader allowed for the airing of feelings and opinions and apparently the members with a destructive bent made the most of the opportunity. Toward the close of the meeting, the leader reported, members appeared to have some feelings of guilt for expressing their feelings the way they had and the group seemed to find it difficult to go ahead. This is an apt illustration of how destructive aggression can be in the group. This situation helps us to appreciate also the difficult task which confronts a leader in maintaining a balance between the appropriate amount of free expression of feeling by the group and control of the aggressive impulses which for some of the members, at least, are in direct conflict with the group's stability.

The experience of still another group illustrates this point further. In this instance, the leader reported that the group was a closely-knit one, accustomed to meeting together and that the group occasionally "handled individual members roughly." When the leader felt the group "was going too far and the individual was becoming angry or embarrassed," he suggested the group give the person a chance to finish. This situation directs attention to the importance of draining off hostility in the group in a constructive way. Often the only way a leader can accomplish this is to permit it to be directed toward himself. This is part of the responsibility of being a leader. In this case, the leader saw the danger of being drawn into the group's attack on an obstreperous member, but under such circumstances, the leader can often rescue the situation

¹⁸ Scheidlinger, p. 115. See footnote, p. 112.

before the attack has precipitated anger or embarrassment, even though it means diverting hostility to himself. Such action can do a great deal to avoid feelings which are destructive to the group itself and to the individuals concerned.

These difficult situations confronting group leaders indicate that aggressive behavior not only occurs frequently, but also presents one of the most trying problems to handle in groups. Almost every group leader has had the experience of being at a loss, at least temporarily, in accurately locating the source of aggression in a group and making a mental blueprint of how to deal with it, at the same time that he continues conducting the group.

Many other reactions springing from personal needs of members are sometimes apparent in the group. The interplay of individuals in a face-to-face group tends to produce certain well-recognized roles which are bestowed on particular members. These roles reflect the emotional needs present in the group and are projected upon one or another of the members whose personality needs prepare him to accept the projection. These include: the "scapegoat" upon whom collective hostility can be vented without too much fear of retaliation; the clown who wins a limited acceptance by offering himself to be laughed at; the "pourer-of-oil-on-troubled-waters" who can be relied on to smooth down the irritations; "the idol" who incarnates the groups values.¹⁹ The leader needs to be aware of the role making of collective emotions and to understand what this process may do both to the creators of such figures and to those who accept the group's projected needs.

The role of the "tester" is sometimes permitted by the group if it suits its needs at the moment. One leader described a group member who was by far the most vocal in the group and functioned in this way. She asked numerous questions, some of them so negative in nature that the more reserved members of the group would have hesitated to raise them. Her "acting out" against the agency was sometimes too hostile for the group to accept, although in general they agreed with her point of view about the agency's policies. When she became too attacking, the group showed its disapproval of her behavior and sought the leader's help directly with problems around policy. This deterred the "tester" only momentarily since her motivation was involved with her need for attention and her feelings of rejection by the group. The group itself developed a diagnostic awareness of what was happening and proceeded to put the discussion on a more positive basis.

Jennings describes the extreme "non-leader," the "under-chosen," as the person who is far from the center of spontaneously initiated activity. She stresses that we can no longer simply classify such a person as an "isolate."²⁰ There are many "personality types" among the "over-chosen" and the "under-chosen" individuals, Jennings points out, and the essential test is the individual's capacity to give and take, to share and participate in the form of group life.

This type of group member so vividly described by Jennings, was fre-

¹⁹ Coyle, p. 93-94. See footnote, p. 98.

²⁰ Jennings, Foreword, xv. See footnote, p. 105.

quently noted by group leaders. Leaders reported members "who sat with eyes lowered and appeared to be doodling throughout the session," "the noticeably passive member," the "shy member who flushed whenever spoken to," the member "who sat apart from the group," all observations indicating that this is a fairly common problem in interpersonal relations. Many leaders were conscious of these reactions and experimented with ways to involve such members in the group. Among these efforts were trying to determine the basis for the isolation of the member, enlisting the help of others in the group in giving him support, conferring with the individuals outside of the group sessions, recognizing special contributions made by these individuals, and using the informal activities of the group to help them develop affectional and professional ties.

In between the extremely aggressive and the extremely passive members of a group is a wide range of members showing other types of behavior. There is the member who is basically narcissistic, such as the supervisor in one group who continually interrupted the discussion of the group to bring up a personal question. Her egocenteredness made her unaware of the needs of other members. She was so immersed in her own supervisory problems that she could not relate to those of the group. Other members presenting a familiar pattern is the member who maintains a watchful air, who has to be sure of his ground before he speaks; the timid member who must wait until he is secure enough with the group to know it is "safe" for him to talk without being attacked or humiliated; the member who can contribute securely and generously because of his professional and personal maturity; and the neutralizer whose constructive influences have the capacity to check hostility and aggression. These and other patterns of behavior must be known to the leader so that he may deal effectively with them in the group.²¹

Influence of Informal Structure

Training groups have been identified in this study as belonging to the category of *formal* groups. Those who lead groups, however, should understand that the formal organization alone is not sufficient to bring about a high degree of productivity and locomotion in the group. Coexistent with the *formal* structure of any group is an *informal* network of relationships. This informal organization includes the aggregate of personal contacts and interactions and the associations of subgroups with one another. It is spontaneous and personal in its expression and as such can greatly support the formal organization. When the informal elements in a group do not impair efficiency, they increase the effectiveness of the formal activity.²²

²¹ See Anna Freud: *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. Translated by Cecil Baines. London: Hogarth Press, 1937. x, 196 pp.

²² Chester Irving Barnard: *The Functions of the Executive*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942, xvi, 334 pp. (pp. 114-123) and *Leadership and Authority in the Local Community*, *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*, Summer-Autumn 1952, Vol. 7, No. 4, 17-18.

Barnard points out that the informal organization has two important effects, (1) it establishes certain attitudes, understandings, customs, habits, institutions, and (2) it creates the conditions under which formal organization may rise.

Much of our understanding and use of the informal structure in training groups has been intuitive rather than analytical. As group leaders, we have been aware of where people sit in the group, what cliques they join, who goes to lunch with whom, when subgroups emerge, etc. We have not, however, given the informal aspects of the formal organization sufficient attention to understand how interdependent these two systems really are and how, through the network of interpersonal relations in the group, the informal organization in the group can represent a powerful controlling force, largely unadmitted and unrecognized by the participants.

In our own agencies we readily recognize the influence of the coffee break, the car pool, agency recreational groups and other informal groupings of staff, on the formal day-by-day work and the decisions that are made there. When staff members come together for training purposes, some of these same influences come into existence. The social relationships formed at meals, the evening buzz sessions, spontaneously initiated play activities, and the traditional "ice breaker" party at the close of the first day's meeting are all illustrative of the interrelatedness of the formal and informal elements in groups.

The membership roles of the formal structure will be modified by the emergence of an informal sociometric pattern of interpersonal relations; informal ways of communicating will develop outside the official group structure; subgroupings will appear which develop their particular interests and loyalties; and sometimes a relatively distinct culture will emerge parallel with but different from that of the formal aspect of the group's life.²³

The functions of the informal structure in the group are primarily those of facilitating communication and maintaining cohesiveness, personal integrity, self-respect, and independent choice.²⁴ All of the excerpts from the group records in this publication reveal the presence of informal structure in varying degrees. In training groups, the informal organization is essential to the achievement of formal goals and must therefore be given as much diagnostic attention as the formal group structure.

Leadership Aspects of Interpersonal Relations

The leader himself is very much a part of the interpersonal relations of the group. He has certain roles in mind for himself which he thinks are appropriate to the purposes of the group. Members may permit or reject these

²³ Robin M. Williams: *American Society: a Sociological Interpretation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952, xiii, 545 pp.

²⁴ Barnard, p. 114-123. See footnote, p. 115.

roles or seek to place him in roles which serve purposes out of keeping with those of the group. For example, when a group begins, members frequently use numerous maneuvers to keep the leader talking and themselves silent. They may sit and wait for the leader to open the discussion, try to entice him into a debate, or attempt to put the session on a question and answer basis.²⁵ We see this latter maneuver frequently in training groups for untrained staffs, since they often see their jobs in terms of specifics and look to the leader as an authority on their problems. These devices are defenses against the members' anxiety as to what will be expected of them and a fear of exposure if they express themselves before they are secure with the group. However, the leader needs to recognize this behavior as a part of a testing out process in the early relationship between leader and group. He must understand it, but yet not become a victim of it, since such maneuvers, if permitted to continue, will deter rather than stimulate movement in the group.

The leader acts as a catalyst to expand and explore ideas but he cannot do this unless he is interested in how each member thinks and reacts to whatever issue happens to be before the group,²⁶ and is able to place the behavior he observes in its proper relationship to other activity going on in the group. He must be watchful of dominant behavior on the part of members and solicitous of the welfare of the less competent, quick to sense group needs and to take steps to see that they are satisfied.²⁷

Learning the interaction patterns of the group is not something the leader can plan for beforehand as he does his agenda. He and the group together make the interpersonal relations for the particular group and the leader's responsibility lies in finding his own place in the pattern; in becoming aware of his relation to individuals and to the group as a whole.²⁸ The hostility which occurs in a group is created in part by the group experience as well as by the experiences which individuals bring with them. The leader's own acceptance of the inevitable presence of hostility helps him to deal with it intelligently rather than increasing it by using unnecessary repressive measures.

The following group portrays a member whose own insecurity and feelings of rejection propelled him to become demanding and competitive in the group:

An institute group made up of county directors had one member, Mr. C, who picked up on nearly every point and adopted a defiant, challenging, "I'm telling you" attitude toward the leader. This behavior persisted and the group was becoming irritated. The leader reacted with strong feeling to this situation. Having tried all the gentle techniques he knew, he came directly to grips with the truculent member, literally "out-shouting" him and asserting himself on the point being discussed. The leader's description of the result is worthy of note: "Through assertion of

²⁵ Benjamin Kotkov: The Group as a Training Device for a Girl's Training School Staff. *International Journal Group Psychotherapy*, 1954, 4, 193-198.

²⁶ Elvin V. Semrad and John Arsenian: The Use of the Group Process in Teaching Group Dynamics. *American Journal Psychiatry*, 1951, 108, 359-360 (November).

²⁷ See Jennings, footnote, p. 105.

²⁸ Coyle, p. 119. See footnote, p. 98.

authority in voice, manner and feeling, I gained control. Mr. C clammed up for nearly a whole day and the group 'fell apart.' All of the spark was gone, they were grim and unresponsive. There was no time for a break, although I was hoping at the time there could have been one. I now think it would have been bad."

Mr. C is not an unfamiliar type of member to most group leaders. From the standpoint of the impact of such behavior on the group, we can observe several things from this leader's very clear description of what happened and his own frustration in handling it. Altercations are unpleasant and guilt-producing and when they happen in a group, people become uncomfortable. Even though this group was obviously annoyed at Mr. C, the leader's use of authority with him may have looked to the group like something which could happen to them too if they spoke up or differed with the leader. This became apparent when the leader tried to recover the equilibrium of the group. Questions had to be addressed to specific individuals in order to get a response. No one volunteered and very little interchange occurred among the members of the group. After the break at noon, the leader decided not to go on with the particular subject of administrative skills because it seemed to be arousing some anxiety in everyone. Instead, he asked each member to talk about administrative problems as he saw them in his own county, going around the group alphabetically. The response to this approach was quite good and the leader felt that as a result, the group began to re-form.

The above illustration demonstrates not only the problem created by the impact of individual behavior on the group, but the suddenness with which the leader and the group can become embroiled, almost before they realize it. This leader was desperately seeking a way of controlling Mr. C in the best interests of the group, but the group's anxiety was aroused around what happened to Mr. C. Undoubtedly many factors entered into Mr. C's behavior, one of which the leader pointed out was his strong resistance to authority of the State office as represented by the leader. In addition, Mr. C's own personality patterns and his need to be the center of attention, whether through positive or negative means, were well known to the members of the group since they had been with him in other meetings. Perhaps they were more tolerant of his behavior than was the leader who was meeting the group for the first time. In this group, some evidence existed in the earlier part of the record that members were reluctant to cooperate in working on the assignment because of their feelings of inadequacy in carrying their administrative responsibilities. Perhaps the group inwardly applauded the predicament the leader got himself into with Mr. C and for that reason did not attempt to help in restoring harmony.

Sometimes a trying situation of this kind will respond to what Eduard C. Lindeman referred to as "leadership with a light touch."²⁹ Humor when appropriately employed can often lighten the seriousness of the situation and give the group a new start. But, humor used to belittle the offender would

²⁹ Eduard C. Lindeman: Leadership with a Light Touch. *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*, Summer 1949, 4, No. 4.

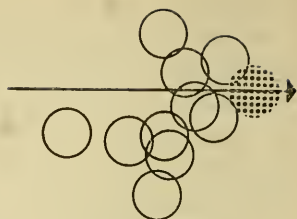
be intolerable in the group situation. Not infrequently such a problem, particularly one which has reached such proportions, has to be handled outside the group, either by seeking the cooperation and help of key group members or by discussing the matter directly with the individual himself. Perhaps what takes the greatest skill on the part of the leader is to handle the hostility in the group in such a way as to make the individual feel acceptance, yet hold him to the standard of being a responsible group member.

The function of the group leader is to assist those relationships which are wholesome to individuals and the group and to discourage the others. James Mann brings together in one brief paragraph many of the basic qualities and functions of the group leader:

The leader's impartiality and his understanding of intragroup reactions; his ability to prevent the appearance of a scapegoat; his subtle protection of the weak and yet his refusal to condemn the strong; his display of strength in opposing, if necessary, the whole group at the appropriate time and for the appropriate reason; his capacity for activity as well as passivity, and most of all, his persistent search for the nature and meaning of the emotional conflicts before him.³⁰

So much of what we have talked about in this chapter we have sometimes sensed intuitively or have recognized as having a resemblance to certain aspects of our casework knowledge about individuals. However, the important step of understanding interpersonal relations in the dimension of the group and of employing specific skills in the guidance of these phenomena in the group is one still to be learned by most casework-oriented social workers. While other concepts about groups are important, becoming knowledgeable and skillful in this area of interpersonal relations is absolutely essential to effective leadership of groups.

³⁰ James Mann: Some Theoretic Concepts of the Group Process. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 1955, 5, 233-241.



THE PROCESS OF GROUP DELIBERATION

ALL ORGANIZED GROUPS, and more particularly those designed for educational purposes, require some formal way of moving toward their objectives. An internal structure must be developed for conducting, governing, and facilitating the work of the group. The process of group deliberation embodies this aspect of our examination of training groups.

Group deliberation calls for a working definition as to its meaning and use. The general framework through which group deliberation takes place is the process of collective thinking. Deliberation itself is concerned primarily with (1) the particular methods through which it takes place; (2) the group interaction which develops around it as a part of collective thinking; and (3) the role of the leader in the deliberative process. These three aspects of group deliberation are of greatest concern in the learning situation.

Deliberation may be directed toward one of three major ends; collective action or decision by the group, in which case the procedure frequently is a parliamentary one; information-giving, where the purpose is to provide information through a lecture, forum, or in other ways for individual use or as the basis for later group decision or discussion; or problem-solving discussion as an educational process which is aimed at individual learning but within the framework of agency goals. It is this last form of deliberation which constitutes the major emphasis in this publication.

Methods for the Conduct of Group Deliberation

Generally in agency training programs, the term "methods" refers to the type of training activity, such as workshop, institute, or professional staff meeting, rather than to the ways used in the group to accomplish its goals, as for example, discussion, lecture, panel, etc. While the type of training activity also affects the way in which the group is conducted, the term "methods" as used in this discussion relates specifically to the internal methods of conducting groups.

The reports of the training groups showed that the following well known methods for stimulating group thinking were used:

Information-giving (lecture, panel, etc.)

Informal discussion

Combined lecture and discussion

Training groups frequently used three supportive techniques to stimulate and accelerate the basic methods mentioned above. They were the use of case material in guiding discussion, role-playing, and audio-visual aids.

The primary emphasis in this section will be on the use of the discussion method and the supplementary educational media mentioned above. This focus has been chosen because of the almost universal use of this method in agency training groups and the problems pointed up by group leaders in relation to it. Information-giving and combined lecture and discussion will be dealt with only briefly.

Information-giving

The giving of information is a very necessary part of the training of public welfare staffs, since such a volume of knowledge about policies and programs must be transmitted. What portions of this information can be given effectively through the lecture or other method of presentation is an educational decision. Helen Perlman's working definition of the lecture as an educational method is "a process of verbal communication between one person and a group or assemblage of others where the responsibility for that communication is carried and discharged by the one." She points out that the lecture as an auxiliary method of teaching has three purposes: it serves to impart knowledge; to organize and pattern knowledge so that relationships and their significance may be seen; and to interpret and illuminate knowledge which though it may be in the learner's possession has not been fully digested.¹

The lecture method is most commonly used for the presentation of information, and as such, has distinct advantages in certain aspects of a training program. The data submitted by State agencies showed this method in use with larger groups of staff where the purpose was interpreting and explaining new programs or policies. In most of these instances, economy of time and the need for uniform presentation of material entered into the decision to use the lecture method. Of course, the use of formal presentation, whether by lecture or in other ways, requires as much by way of educational diagnosis and skillful application as any other educational process. At the same time, we need to remind ourselves that the lecture method limits in certain ways the operation of the most important vehicle for learning, the relationship between teacher and student. A one way traffic of ideas cannot bring the learners into close

¹ Helen H. Perlman: The Lecture as a Method of Teaching Case Work. *Social Service Review*, 1951, 25, 19-32 (March).

relationship with the lecturer. Nor does the lecture always provide the conditions under which learning can be best incorporated as a part of the self.² The lecture method should be reinforced through discussion and application on the job.

The discussion method

Discussion is thinking out loud together with others; a reasoned verbal communication between two or more persons.³ It is intellectually governed, although emotions may be involved or may underlie the reasoning. Helen Perlman points out that in the use of this method a conscious effort must be made to hold the emotions in check within the intellectual processes. In training groups, discussion is aimed at problem-solving through an educational process and all the group starts with the same frame of reference.

One of the most helpful guides to collective thinking through discussion is Dewey's steps in problem-solving⁴: (1) *pre*-reflective, or the selection of the problem to be studied; (2) getting out ideas as a first step in looking toward a solution; (3) intellectualization of the difficulty into a problem to be solved; raising questions which need solving; (4) use of one suggestion after another as a leading idea or hypothesis to initiate and guide observation; mental elaboration of the idea or supposition; (5) testing the hypothesis by overt or imaginative action, and (6) *post*-reflective, a resulting direct experience of mastery, satisfaction, and enjoyment. These functions of reflective activity need not follow one another in any set order. Elaboration of the hypothesis, for example, may come at any intermediate time.

In the agency setting, Dewey's beginning step of *pre*-reflective activity will usually be taken prior to the group's coming together, although after it assembles, the group may select the emphasis it wishes within the general framework of the problem. The last step, *post*-reflective activity, usually takes place after the individuals in the group have returned to their jobs, and is closely tied in with integration of new learning on the job.

Dewey's steps in reflective thinking may be viewed in a parallel way in the educational process in social work. Towle and Perlman in their various writings indicate that the well-integrated ego follows this same sequence within itself as it absorbs learning. We become engaged in the learning process first by the ego perceiving the problem which is under discussion; then the ego operates adaptively by selecting out certain desirable ways of handling the problem, of making judgments and choices in relation to the knowledge most needed; the executive function of the ego then takes action by concluding what solution can best be arrived at; and finally when the testing out of possible

² Selma Frailberg: Teaching Psychoanalytic Theory to Social Work Students. *Social Casework*, 1955, 36, 245-246 (June).

³ Helen H. Perlman: Teaching Casework by the Discussion Method. *Social Service Review*, 1950, 24, 334-346 (September).

⁴ John Dewey: *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*. New York: D. C. Heath, 1933. x, 301 pp. (p. 106).

solutions is satisfactorily achieved, the ego is able to integrate the experience and it becomes a part of the learner's storehouse of knowledge for future use.

Once the pattern of the collective thinking becomes a part of the group leader's thinking and practice, the teaching-learning process can be greatly accelerated and the group can move in an orderly and progressive way toward its goals. But group discussion can also fail to follow this sequence. Discussion can be unfocused, go off on tangents, fail to produce a range of ideas from which choices can be made, and, in the last analysis, remain unincorporated in the thinking and experience of the members. What, then, makes group discussion effective and productive? The answers to this question lie in part in all the preceding discussion—in the use of educational diagnosis, in the selection of members, in the purposeful development of a "curriculum" for the particular group, in the ability to teach through generalization and conceptualization of knowledge, and in understanding individual and group behavior as reflected in interpersonal relations. But in addition to these skills, there is the important one of being a good discussion leader.

The following process record which covers three sessions of a training group is given here in full to show the discussion process in motion. The reader will recognize this group as the one including four newly appointed male county directors who met with the training consultant for a series of orientation sessions.⁵

The group represented an unusual diversity in education, social background, sophistication, and experience, all of which made for problems in communication and deliberation. A closer look at the four individuals in this group will help us to see more clearly what the learning problems for each were.

Mr. H, a man in his early sixties, had been a highly successful business man all his life, with no idea of going into social work. About the time he was thinking of retiring from business, a friend suggested that he file in the examination for the position of county director. Although Mr. H has only a high school education, if that, he has been a very enterprising and successful person. He has a "hail fellow" manner and is active in the businessmen's clubs of his community. The field representative reported that Mr. H made excellent use of her services in getting acquainted with his job. Although he is outspoken about what he believes, he shows a real desire to learn and is able to admit what he doesn't know. He responded to the plan of group meetings for orientation with real enthusiasm.

Mr. S, the youngest member of the group, is in his late twenties. He has a master's degree in education and has taught school for a number of years. He had been thinking of changing to social work for some time, so when the job of county director was vacant in his county, he applied. He looks forward to professional training in this field some day. Mr. S comes from a rural county and has only one caseworker on the staff. He is quiet and retiring and gives the impression of having little self-confidence, but a great desire to do things right. He also welcomed the orientation meetings.

The third member of the group, Mr. M, is in his late thirties, has a high school and business college education. He has worked in industry in personnel work. Although quieter than Mr. H, he has an air of quiet confidence and self-assurance.

⁵ See page 77.

The fourth member, Mr. J, is a man in his fifties. He comes from a small rural county where he has lived all his life, and is a graduate of a small college near his home. Prior to employment with the public welfare agency, he taught school. In the group, he is quiet and less outgoing than the others. In his own community, he is very active in community affairs.

The pre-reflective step taken in this group's learning, namely the determination of content emphasis, was extremely important. As pointed out previously, the focus in the group orientation sessions was on social values and philosophy rather than on the specifics of the agency's organization and program. The educational diagnosis of the group revealed the need for an orientation to a social philosophy and more specifically to the concepts on which public welfare services are based as a beginning step in their learning.

Very early in the discussion, Mr. H stated that he is finding his work as county director calls for radical readjustment of many ideas he previously held. He expressed this vividly, saying "This stuff is really revolutionary, you know." He said he had always believed that anyone who is worth anything tries to take care of himself, but in this line of business, you find people who don't seem to be trying, and you have to take care of them anyway. This was said not so much in a tone of resentment as in a tone of wonderment.

Sometimes, Mr. H admitted, when faced with problems such as a mother with several illegitimate children, he would "like to take them to the river and sink them." But his tone seemed to express frustration at not knowing what to do with the problem rather than punitiveness toward the individual. Actually when it was pointed out to him that the general relief statute makes it optional whether the local agency assists non-residents, he remarked that the statute might just as well be mandatory, since, of course, you can't force people to live where they don't want to, and you can't let them go hungry. Mr. M joined the discussion on illegitimate children by asserting that in his opinion they should all be placed in good adoptive homes.

In this first session, Mr. H seems to be the member farthest removed in life experiences from those of the clients he serves and as would be expected, he expresses attitudes and feelings that public welfare agencies have come to know as fairly typical of beginning staff members who have not had prior social work education or experience. The leader points out diagnostically that Mr. H seems sincerely troubled rather than punitive in his observations, a very important point in gauging his potentials for growth.

Mr. H is beginning to measure his own values against those he believes the agency expects of him. His own protected life situation makes the stark reality of public welfare cases seem incomprehensible to him. He also seems to be testing the leader and his colleagues to learn whether they will reject him because of these attitudes. What counts most with the individual in a situation like this is the effect on him of the circumstances of his life and the influence of the group in which he has grown up. These are the values that are reflected in Mr. H's participation in the group. If members can express openly in the group the very sentiments that may need to be dislodged, and are not punished

for doing so, the feeling of group support can help them to relinquish their old values.⁶

In our second session, I set as my goal to get across one basic concept, namely, that there are reasons for human behavior (i.e. behavior is symptomatic). Discussion in the group was initiated by my asking them to tell the types of situations they are most concerned about as county directors. They mentioned unmarried mothers, especially those with more than one illegitimate child, neglectful families, men who won't work, etc. Using this as a springboard to show why workers in public assistance need to understand human behavior, I then made a brief presentation of our theme for the day—there are reasons for behavior. I passed out some excerpts of case material which depicted behavior that is not “sensible” or that is not socially acceptable and asked them to speculate as to what reasons might lie behind the behavior in each instance.

I began with material that I thought would tend to have them identify with the client before introducing cases involving immoral behavior. The first of these, the Allen case, involved a woman severely disabled by arthritis and unable to care for herself but refusing to go to a rest home. The directors were all quite responsive to this case, bringing out such factors as fear of rest homes, the meaning of home, and the difficulty of change for an older person, and her feeling that she must look after her husband. Mr. S speculated on Mrs. Allen's relationship to her husband, that she might be getting satisfaction out of dominating him as well as feeling protective of him. Here was an instance of Mr. S's expressing a concept that the other members were not able to understand. Mr. S also used phrases such as “the neurotic pattern” which meant nothing to the others. Interestingly enough, his tendency to do this decreased as the meetings progressed.

One of the case situations was a protective referral in which a neighbor complained to the prosecuting attorney that Mrs. L was running around with men and neglecting her children. Some of the clues to the reasons for her behavior seemed quite obvious. Mr. M was the first to pick up on one of these, pointing out that loneliness could be a factor. Mr. S stressed her childhood experiences as a cause, and both Mr. S and Mr. M were able to see some strengths in Mrs. L.

Mr. H had been silent during much of this discussion and when I asked him what he thought about it, he said he was afraid he agreed with the neighbor, who thinks Mrs. L is a “no-good woman” and her change for the better will not last. He seemed to be thinking about this and bothered that he could not agree with the rest. He finally asked me directly and with real sincerity whether I thought a woman like Mrs. L who had been running around with men *could* change. I gave examples pro and con, indicating individual differences, and pointing up some of the positives in this case.

Using these cases as a starting point, we went on to discuss more general material on the development of personality, covering physical factors, role of intelligence, emotional needs, importance of early family experience, cultural factors, and economic and social conditions. Under the latter point, Mr. H brought up for discussion the different attitude individuals take toward saving for their future. He thought the political trends of the times, together with the existence of welfare programs made people less self-reliant, although he recognized that people varied. I picked

⁶ Kurt Lewin and Paul Grabbe: Conduct, Knowledge and Acceptance of New Values. *Journal of Social Issues*, 1945, 1, 53-63 (August).

up the latter point and asked the group to consider what makes for differences in people. The members were able to relate this to our earlier discussion of early family experiences and cultural factors. This was only partially satisfying to Mr. H.

Mr. H brought out that some of the situations he has encountered since becoming director have shocked him. Two years ago he would never have believed these could exist. I tried to make him feel that we understood what he is going through, that many of us had had similar upsetting experiences when we started in this work. Our first reaction is likely to be that these people are different from us, a lower class of people. Actually as we begin to understand the causes of their behavior, we begin to see the true meaning of "there but for the grace of God, go I."

The leader had obviously worked out a thoughtful approach to what she wanted to teach and the most effective method for achieving it with this group. She kept the focus on what was of concern to them. By discussing what they could understand and accept in terms of values, she led them into the more difficult area of dealing with situations which challenged their established values. The interaction here was positive and apparently the group was stirred into thinking about the problems and relating what they saw in the case situations to what was already familiar to them. As Lewin and Grabbe point out, group members achieve complete acceptance of new ideas best through the discovery of these facts by themselves. Only then, do the facts become really *their* facts, as against other people's.⁷

Mr. H's responses in this session are very revealing in relation to his struggle to change. His honesty about his feelings is in itself a positive force in his learning. He was apparently impressed by the fact that the other directors could identify with the client to some extent and was troubled by his own conflict in values. Mr. H shows the anxiety which grows out of the fear of change discussed by Towle. Although he was seeking reassurance from the leader that his point of view was acceptable, at the same time he was beginning to place greater trust in the thinking of the group, even though it did not tally with his own. Mr. H and the group leader seemed to have developed a positive relationship which permitted him to explore his attitudes out in the open. This is part of what Charlotte Towle means when she talks about relationship as a means to effecting change in the learner. One prerequisite to such change is that new concepts be imparted by an authority whom the learner trusts and with whom he has a strong, positive relationship.⁸

This session also illustrates the application of Dewey's second step in the thinking process—encouraging the group to express its ideas around the problem under discussion. The leader accepts the contributions of the members but adds some beginning knowledge about causative factors in the lives of clients, thus paving the way for helping the members intellectualize the difficulty into a problem to be solved in their learning, the next step in the educative process.

⁷ Lewin and Grabbe, p. 63. See footnote, p. 125.

⁸ Charlotte Towle: *The Learner on Education for the Professions: As Seen in Education for Social Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954. 432 pp. (p. 138).

In the third session, the content covered two basic concepts—the concept of right and the concept of service. We began with a consideration of the right to assistance, and the group seemed to understand and accept this to a degree that surprised me. I presented some of the historical background, relating this to the concept of the rights of the individual expressed in American political philosophy—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution. Also I described to the members how our attitude that poverty was the fault of the individual was changed by the depression. The directors had quite a discussion of the reasons for poverty today. Mr. H emphasized the individual's responsibility as a cause, but Mr. M pointed out the plight of the older worker, and Mr. H recognized that this was beyond the control of the individual. The members finally agreed that the causes ranged all the way from those that come from within the individual (not necessarily his "fault," as it may be a physical or mental disability), to those at the other extreme, growing entirely out of economic conditions, but that the majority reflect the interrelationship of personal and economic factors.

In discussing the Social Security Act, I pointed out that the definition of eligibility in the law was an effort to make the determination of need objective, substituting rule for whim, or at least for the subjective opinion of the worker. I brought up the difference between "worthy" and "eligible." They seemed to be really clear on the soundness of this principle and recognized they wouldn't really want to be responsible for deciding on people's moral character.

After lunch, I presented the concept of service, again tying in the historical background. As a basis for discussing the importance of attitudes in the worker's relationship with clients, I asked them to consider what attitudes they would want in a person they employ as caseworker, or what attitudes they would avoid. Mr. S thought you would avoid the over-eager do-gooder who wants to help people for her own glory. He mentioned finding such attitudes among volunteers. He would want a person who really liked the job and found it challenging. Mr. M stressed that the caseworker must be a person who likes people.

Mr. H had been quiet during this talk about attitudes. Finally he said this discussion made him wonder whether he is the right one for this kind of work. He has thought about this a lot. He isn't sure he "likes people"—he doesn't rush to the office in the morning, eager to embrace all the people his agency works with. I said he had raised a question that we all needed to think about—what do we mean by the phrase "liking people." Is it the same as liking our friends? The group discussed this very thoughtfully, and more than at any previous time, I felt they were all together and really trying to help Mr. H with his problem. They agreed that this "liking" was different from personal friendship and also that no one likes *everybody*. Someone suggested that a person who doesn't like people is easier to define and this would be a disqualification for social work.

Mr. M finally came up with the idea that the worker must "like people" in the sense that he can put himself in the other person's shoes and understand how he feels. The group accepted this. Somewhere along the way, I tried to put in some reassurance. Accepting attitudes are developed through understanding and experience, and this process takes time. A person cannot expect to arrive at changed attitudes overnight.

Mr. H went on to say that his job of county director has turned out to be different from what he expected, and he isn't sure whether he likes it. The person who talked with him about the job knew Mr. H to be a "worry-wart" and told him

not to take the cases to heart or his worries home with him, but to keep himself "detached." Mr. H saw himself as the financial and business manager of the agency, and was determined to be "impartial." He has been trying to do this but now wonders if this is wrong.

Mr. H's question here seemed to have two aspects. He was wanting to know about objectivity and the kind of attitude a caseworker should have, on the one hand, and on the other, about his own function as a director. Mr. M assured him that one does need a certain amount of detachment, and it is not good to "take your cases home with you."

At one point Mr. H seemed to be asking in effect whether, since he is just the business manager of the agency, and doesn't carry a caseload or give supervision, is it really necessary for him to undergo all this discussion about attitudes, etc. I answered directly that even though he never sees a client, I thought the director affected everything that happened to the clients of his agency—that his concept of the purpose of the program and the way it should be carried out would permeate the whole agency. He agreed that this might be so.

Mr. H said he would like to know what makes a county director good. The group agreed that this should be postponed to our last session, when the field representatives would be present. I suggested that they answer this for themselves at our last session by putting all their ideas together. They would have none of this, and insisted they wanted this question answered by their field representatives.

This session shows a quality of collective thinking which undoubtedly influenced the thinking of everyone in the group. Obviously each of these directors will need continued help in evolving a new set of values, but the group experience in dealing with this problem stirred the members' ideas and social conscience in a way that a one to one teaching relationship could not have provided. The learning climate in this group was extremely favorable. One saw the group coming to the support of one of their members who was struggling with a problem. Hostility was practically non-existent and the members involved themselves earnestly with the learning process. Since the re-educative task has to fulfill what is equivalent to a change in culture, Lewin indicates that "only by anchoring his own conduct in something as large, substantial and superindividual as the culture of a group can the individual stabilize his new beliefs sufficiently to keep them immune from day-by-day fluctuations of moods and influences to which he is subject."⁹

In this third session there is a quality of climax, as though the group had moved through a steadily introspective and educational process to a recognition of the problem for each of them individually as well as jointly for the interests of the agency. Steps three and four in Dewey's sequence are visible here. The group not only intellectualized the difficulty, but proved highly fertile in making suggestions and in having ideas about the problem. This session also moves partially into the next step of testing their ideas against situations in their own counties or against imaginary situations such as the one

⁹ Lewin and Grabbe, p. 55. See footnote, p. 125.

introduced by the leader about the qualities to be looked for in the employment of casework staff.

After this session, the group had three more sessions to go. Much more intensification of the ideas involved and struggle with the application of them on the job could be expected in these later sessions, but even at this stage the group was learning. The leader not only has the capacity to encourage, but also to understand and support the self-struggle of each member, particularly Mr. H, in his learning around the county director's job. Although the emotional impact of the ideas in this group was apparent, the educational process was kept intellectually and objectively focused.

Dewey's last step in the thinking process, that of *post-reflective* thinking, actually occurred for this group after each session and in between sessions, since the meetings were spaced every week for six weeks. The members had an opportunity for the "incubation" of ideas as described by Bernard between these sessions and the realities of the director's job undoubtedly provided many occasions for testing and verification.

Recalling the thoughtful joint planning for this series as carried out by the training consultant and the field representatives administratively responsible for members of the group,¹⁰ we can see again the important relationship between individual and group teaching and the reinforcement of learning which each gives to the other. This synchronized approach to learning is explicit in Lewin's observation of re-education as "a process in which changes of knowledge and beliefs, changes of values and standards, changes of emotional attachments and needs, and changes of everyday conduct occur not piecemeal and independently of each other, but within the framework of the individual's total life in the group."¹¹

The qualities of a good discussion leader, while seen in a laboratory way in the above recording, should perhaps be described here more specifically in terms of the skills required. Helen Perlman identifies these skills for the classroom teacher, and those which can be adapted for use in agency training groups are included here.¹² The good discussion leader:

1. Is capable of attentive listening—being alert to the import of what is being said.
2. Has the ability to maintain a focus upon a nuclear idea while at the same time following out its radiations and then moving back to the central idea.
3. Is able periodically to pull together related parts of the discussion.
4. Has a good sense of direction and clear perception of immediate and remote goals.
5. Is able to structure the major teaching points in each session, relating them to the structure and content of the particular training activity in its entirety.

¹⁰ See p. 81.

¹¹ Lewin and Grabbe, p. 55. See footnote, p. 125.

¹² Perlman. See footnote, p. 122.

6. Anticipates the possible ideas which may be or need to be evoked by the discussion of the central question.
7. Uses a working outline which incorporates, among other things, the two previous points.
8. Explains to the group, at the beginning, the plan for the session and indicates how the leader and the group will function together.

Combined lecture and discussion

As brought out earlier, the lecture method alone has certain specific advantages in agency training groups. When combined with discussion, it serves the major educational purpose of facilitating the discussion, rather than being an end in itself. This type of information or conceptual material is usually given by the group teacher in an informal way and rarely at any length at any one time. So in this connection, "lecture" may be too formal a term. Such informal presentations have a very important contribution to make to group discussion. Unlike the more formal lecture, these presentations cannot always be foreseen or planned since they have to be related to the group's learning needs as expressed at the time.

Perlman identifies a variety of ways in which the use of lecture material can be employed in casework discussions in the classroom.¹³ Many of these are equally applicable in the agency training group:

1. At times in staff groups discussion cannot start or proceed because the group lacks the necessary knowledge on which to base their thinking. This is an appropriate time for the lecture presentation of sufficient facts, theory, or concepts to give the group momentum.
2. Frequently certain information or materials may not be readily available or accessible to staffs in agencies and the leader must take responsibility for summarizing and analyzing such material for presentation to the group.
3. For purposes of discussion, certain facts or policies may need to be condensed or telescoped in compact form, so as not to divert the group from the main stream of the discussion.
4. Fragmentation may occur in the learner's thinking and a brief periodic lecture serves the purpose of helping the individual to take inventory. The leader does this by filling in the gaps not covered in the discussion and pulling together the pieces to make them part of the whole.
5. The spontaneous lecture is a part of practically every discussion and may be used by the group leader in various ways. The leader may see advantages in using the informal lecture at a "low" point in the group's discussion to refresh the thinking processes. It may also be important at times as a way of diverting the group from going off on a tangent, becoming involved in an argument, or seeking to "act out" feelings which are disruptive to the group.

The lecture form of presentation is sometimes used by the insecure leader as an escape, since it circumscribes the group's activity and keeps it

¹³ Perlman. See footnote, p. 122.

within "safe" bounds. But, unfortunately, learning can itself be circumscribed under such circumstances.

Techniques in Discussion

In their use of the discussion method, group leaders employed several important media to accelerate, extend, and deepen the group's learning—the use of case material, role playing, and audio-visual aids. Each of these will be developed here as supplementary tools to the discussion method rather than as separate techniques in themselves. Since the use of case material was by far the most widely employed, this will be dealt with more comprehensively.

Use of case material

The use of case material is both a major resource in the vitalization of the deliberative process and a medium which can under certain conditions create serious problems for group teaching and learning.

The data submitted by group leaders revealed some observations concerning the use of case material which are extremely important in the educational process. Not only was case material (or other material from practice, such as supervisory conferences or administrative problems) used almost universally, but with few exceptions, leaders used material which came directly from the experience of group members themselves. Both leaders and their groups were generally enthusiastic about the use of their own material. Yet in the group records submitted, many instances occurred in which the use of the members' own material created problems which disturbed the learning process.

Even without the benefit of the questionnaire data, we could predict that agency staff groups would build training content around material directly from their own practice or that of their colleagues in the same agency. This has been traditional practice in agency settings, and for understandable reasons. It is less complicated administratively to ask members to submit their own case material; it seems logical to deal with the problems which are closest at hand; and, probably most important of all, staffs have themselves been fairly insistent on using local cases, feeling that such discussions have more meaning for them.

Among the factors which have influenced this trend, is the long tradition in social work of dealing with case material in the individual supervisory conference. The transfer of this type of teaching activity to the group learning situation has occurred as a very natural sequence of events. And since the staff member is accustomed to discussing his own cases in the individual teaching situation, using the same method in the group has been assumed to have certain advantages.

A cardinal principle governing the use of case material is that it be selected in relation to the curriculum content and educational objectives of the particular training series. Sometimes we permit the case material which is solicited from staffs to determine the educational direction of the group rather than selecting material suited to the specific teaching goals.

Selecting case materials with educational goals in mind is an extremely difficult task. To begin with, the leader must first be very clear as to what it is he wishes to teach conceptually and in what progression. At times, locating the right piece of material may mean searching in many parts of the agency or even outside it. Excerpts, rather than whole cases, are frequently more suitable for the teaching of particular points, but locating these is also difficult.

Agencies are somewhat the victims of tradition in trying to face this problem. Only in recent years has social work education itself begun to move from the teaching of specifics in case records to a highly selective use of them as a basis for teaching conceptually. As agencies grow in their understanding of the process of teaching in a generalized, as well as in a specific way, case material will be used in a more differential way rather than as a crutch.

Our frequent use of case material stems also from the educational concept that knowledge is for use, and its assimilation can best be achieved through application of it to our own practice. This point is closely related to the principle developed earlier that in group, as well as individual teaching, leaders must help the learner to perceive general principles as a basis for the transfer of his learning. Our earlier discussion also stressed the inevitable hazards which lie in teaching from case records when the focus is kept on the specifics of the case rather than on the concepts or principles to be learned from it.

Educationally there are several things we need to be aware of in this connection. First of all, is the important matter of deciding what is the appropriate use of case material in the group teaching situation. It is not, as apparently turned out to be the case in some groups, that of providing answers to specific questions on individual cases. When this is necessary, it is more appropriately done in individual supervision. Group discussion of what should be done in specific cases only distorts the problem. One of the basic principles in group teaching is that the leader refrain from attempting to solve the individual problem in the group—a goal which is much easier stated than held to, particularly when individuals, or the group itself, are pressing for answers. Wanting answers is often one reason why groups insist upon using their own cases for discussion, and the leader in agreeing to this, or in initiating it, should be very clear as to his educational use of the material. If the group's motive in asking for their own cases is based on their need to "get the answers," then the leader's effort to keep the focus on general principles can be a very frustrating one to the group.

The case conference method in individual supervision and the process of collective thinking on problems in the group are two quite different educational processes and staff members should be helped to understand this so that they may learn to use each type of situation appropriately.

If cases are selected with definite educational objectives in mind and the teaching content is built around the concepts illustrated by them, rather than around the case itself, the learning process can be greatly enriched and the educational goals more readily assured. One way of guaranteeing this is to develop and project the curriculum objectives for the particular group, in

Tyler's frame of reference, and only then to seek the illustrative case or other material which will best support these teaching goals.

In the agency setting, the group leader's understanding of what is needed by way of teaching materials is not the only consideration involved. If he does not have access to sufficient material, or the right kind, he must convey his criteria for selection to others in such a way that useful and positive teaching records will be forthcoming.

The group leader may need to condense, select, excerpt, or edit the material he receives before using it for teaching. This is an important process and one which can markedly influence the direction and quality of the group's discussion.

Use of members' own material.—The use of case material from the practice of individuals in the group has psychological implications for teaching and learning. This is particularly true in the practice areas of direct services and supervision and with staffs who are not equipped by professional education for their tasks.

Selection of case material from the experience of group members must be governed by the same educational criteria as those indicated for case material in general. However, in addition, other factors must be taken into account in the process. For one thing, in deciding on case material from the practice of members in the group, selection is always limited by the quality and variety of the experience represented in the group. Sometimes the leader may find that it is not of as high a caliber or as positive as he would like for teaching. Material which is negatively slanted always presents a problem for teacher and learner alike. One leader commented, "I think it would have helped the group to have some 'foreign' material that they could have analyzed with fewer reservations caused by fear of hurting the contributor's feelings."

This same leader also pointed out that securing case material directly from the members of the group helped her to know the level at which the staffs were performing and at what point she would have to start in her use of it. This is important diagnostically in relation to setting educational goals. If it is administratively convenient, the leader can call for material from the members in advance to use in gauging their level of understanding and in planning the content of the meetings, rather than for discussion in the group. In such instances, the individuals need to understand the purpose of the request and the use to be made of the material.

Choosing materials from the group can create feelings of choice or rejection for the members themselves. This was illustrated in a workshop for supervisors where the members were asked in advance to select from a list of proposed subjects one to be developed in writing for use in the training sessions. The members had four weeks in which to prepare the material and the leader selected the ones to be used in the group. These were duplicated and distributed to the members in advance of the meeting. The leader reported the material enlivened the discussion and apparently the members were enthusiastic about the plan.

Several other observations about this particular group, however, will help us to see some of the implications for the learning process. Under such a plan, on the one hand, selecting material always presents potential difficulties with regard to unhappy reactions from those whose contributions are not used; on the other, the reaction may be one of relief on the part of the unchosen and one of anxiety on the part of the chosen.

When such a plan is used in the preparation of teaching material, the group should understand in advance that not all material can be used in the sessions. But where staff members have invested time and thought in the preparation of material, the leader should make every effort to utilize it in other ways, either as supplementary material in the discussion or with other training groups in the agency. If the material is too poor for use, an individual conference with the person may help him to see ways in which he can improve his material in the future.

In the workshop referred to above, for example, one supervisor whose paper had not been selected for use, asked for an individual conference with the training consultant who was leading the group "seeking support on what she had done." While this supervisor might have been relieved that her paper was not discussed in the group, apparently she felt what she had done was important enough to warrant some attention. Her feelings were undoubtedly heightened by the fact that the paper of her colleague from the same county was selected for presentation.

The second problem in the use of practice material submitted by group members lies in the difficult interpersonal relations which may emerge around the discussion of such material. One aspect of this problem is revealed in the supervisory group referred to above:

Two of the supervisors in the group came from a county which carried more status than the other three represented, primarily because it has a more stabilized program, better trained staff, and, in general, was more progressive in its administration. Throughout the sessions, the two supervisors from this county remained somewhat aloof and gave the impression of being superior to the rest of the group. The paper of one of these supervisors was selected for discussion and dealt with the administrative aspects of the supervisor's job.

The leader describes the group's reaction. "Following the supervisor's presentation of a work plan she adhered to in her own job, most of the group's comments were along the lines of amazement at how 'perfect' the plan seemed and how well she kept to her schedule. Then the members became more specific in their questioning. They questioned the volume of case reading included in the plan; then wanted to know what this supervisor considered 'case reading'; did she mean 'block reading,' what was the difference between the two, etc. I stepped in at this point, sensing that the group's need to deflate the perfection of the plan was coming to the fore. I took a period of time to present material from the agency manual in relation to the definition of the two types of case reading and moved the discussion to more neutral territory."

The leader, in this instance, rescued the group from their own negative feelings toward this particular supervisor, feelings which from the record, seemed, in part

at least, related to the fact that this supervisor and her colleague had formed a critical subgroup and had remained apart from the concerns of the group as a whole.

The principle to be observed from this situation and others like it is that the individual who presents material from his own practice is always vulnerable. If his role and status in the group are such that the members feel resentment or hostility toward him, they will retaliate through an attack on the material he presents. The destructive effects of such behavior on the learning climate in the group are apparent.

Even when the group bears no ill will toward the individual, he can become a target if the leader permits the group to pursue the specifics of the case rather than the underlying principles involved. In an institute for caseworkers, for example, each member presented one of his own cases and led the discussion on it. The leader reported that one caseworker became defensive of the casework methods used under the questioning and comments of the group. Although the worker appeared to accept the suggestions of the group, the leader found it necessary to point up the strengths shown in the caseworker's presentation. In another similar situation, the leader had suggested that the treatment plan as presented by a caseworker on one of his own cases be discussed by the group from the standpoint of professional concepts. In response to this, the member who presented the case material felt that he had to defend it by saying that "his situation in an isolated area made it necessary for him to act *differently*."

"It is an axiom that people cannot be taught who feel that they are at the same time being attacked."¹⁴ This statement describes what can be involved when group members are placed in the position of defending their practice, particularly when they are still insecure in their knowledge and skill. This type of problem can be greatly intensified when the group membership reflects, as so many groups included in the study data did, a combination of caseworkers and supervisors, supervisors and administrators, etc. Under such circumstances presentation of a member's own case could be accompanied by a variety of feelings, some of which would be felt but not openly expressed in the group.

This problem must, of course, be looked at in the light of the training and experience of the members of the group and the nature of their relationship as a group. For the individual to be able to share his professional work in group discussion requires considerable maturity and security. It is possible for professionally competent people to become increasingly free in their willingness and ability to analyze their own work objectively, but this is a gradual process and can be realized only when the group has been together often enough to feel comfortable with and trusting of one another.

Several groups encountered the problem of whether or not the author of case material should identify himself. Sometimes authorship is acknowledged at the beginning, but when case material coming from a group is disguised by the leader and used without reference to the person who produced it, the

¹⁴ Lewin and Grabbe, p. 62. See footnote, p. 125.

question of identification may occur. The problem is not made any less complicated by the natural curiosity of the members as to whose material it is. The individual feels uncomfortable when he does not speak up and acknowledge his own case. In one group, ten minutes after a case was under discussion, the supervisor responsible for it identified herself, voluntarily and almost compulsively, with great feeling expressed in face, voice, and manner. Once she had done this, however, the members seemed to identify with her and were more relaxed and willing to acknowledge their own material.

In this same group, a group member who had assumed the role of "tester" stated flatly she could not identify her material because it would "show up" her one and only worker. Others reacted to this by saying that by then they had no qualms about disclosing the identity of their material. The leader left the choice with the individual in each case. She observed in her report that up to this point, the group's discussion had been somewhat uninspired. But beginning with the discussion about identifying their material, the group seemed to move closer together and the discussion became more animated and dynamic. Members seemed to accept identification of their cases as a matter of course throughout the remainder of the session, but of course, this did not guarantee that their acceptance was a real or comfortable one.

Several other problems came to light in the use of members' cases. In two groups, caseworkers were asked to present cases from their caseloads, in one instance new applications for assistance. The group discussed them very much as would be done in an individual supervisory conference, even to the point of determining the next steps in casework treatment. Since these were groups which continued over an extended period of time, the caseworkers continued to report on developments in the cases and the groups continued to discuss the problems and how best to work on them. Such a procedure can easily result in the group taking over the individual supervisory function. Where individual supervision is weak, group members may welcome this type of help and support from the group, but it creates many problems for the individual back on his job and places the emphasis in group learning on the specifics of the individual case and on the practice of the particular staff member.

Requests for case material by the group leader or staff supervisor prior to the meeting may also stir a variety of feelings on the part of those who are to attend. If all members of a training group are required to submit material in advance, for example, they may compete with each other or some members may feel their cases are not good enough. Even if submitting material is optional, members who do not wish to conform may feel pressure to do so, or those who submit material may resent those who do not.

This matter of using material from the practice of the members themselves is a very sensitive area and requires much careful thought. This is particularly so in public welfare agencies where group membership is fairly heterogeneous and many members of the staff do not have the requisite professional knowledge to feel secure in their practice. From an educational point of view, more negative than positive factors seem to be present in the use of such material. But

as pointed out in the discussion of the principle of generalization of knowledge, the *way* in which the case material is used will determine the extent to which positive results are possible. In one group where the members' own cases were used, the leader asked the workers to present their cases and then asked the group to consider what major principles or concepts were reflected in the problems presented, as for example, what the cases reflected by way of lack of community resources, what understanding the group had of the problem of desertion in the light of what they were learning about behavior and relationships, etc. In this instance, the discussion was developed in relation to the teaching goals the leader had in mind. Where case material of members is handled in this way, the problems pointed up here are removed to some extent. But to remove them altogether requires an exceedingly alert and skilled leader.

The interest of staffs in wanting their learning to be developed around what has the most meaning for them, namely their own agency and their own practice, is a valid one. We can make the error of utilizing case material so remote and unrelated to the staff's needs as to defeat the educational purposes. The real test comes in relating the selection of case material to what needs to be taught. If this is successfully done, staffs are less apt to insist on "local" material for its own sake.

Aids to staff in use of case material.—When members are expected to present case material in the group, whether from their own practice or not, they should be given help in selecting appropriate cases and in the preparation of the material for teaching purposes.

The experiences of some of the training supervisors in the use of case material offer possible approaches in meeting this problem. Some agencies used cases from their own staffs, disguised them thoroughly, and then presented them in groups other than where the material originated. Under this plan the teaching material reflected the setting and the problems of the group without creating the difficulties which often accompany the use of material from the immediate group. Another very real advantage in such a plan is that it gives staff a broader perspective through looking at experiences and practice other than their own.

In several instances, where caseworkers were expected to present their own cases in the group, staff supervisors gave considerable supportive help in the selection and preparation of the cases for presentation. Skill is required in knowing what points to highlight and how to present material. Any staff member who has this kind of responsibility in a group needs help with learning how to do it. The selection of points for teaching can in itself help to focus the group on basic principles rather than on specifics. In one county, the supervisors assisted their workers in the selection of cases which were appropriate to the learning goals of the group as outlined in the training plan; helped them to prepare their material through individual conferences; and, in general, reassured them in their handling of the material before the group, as well as preparing them for the reactions from the group. This advance help and

support improves the quality of the presentation markedly and, in turn, results in a higher quality of discussion around the material.

Role playing

Role playing is a newcomer to the educational family, but apparently a very popular one. Like all teaching media, role playing requires skill and selectivity in its use. Klein points out that "role playing is not a device for giving the answers; it is not designed to persuade the group to a specific point of view. It is to stimulate and encourage thinking." He suggests the following main uses of role playing: (1) training in leadership and human relations skills; (2) training in sensitivity to people and situations; (3) the stimulation of discussion; (4) training in more effective group problem-solving.¹⁵

Role playing is a particularly difficult method to use skillfully because it is so intimately tied up with the interpersonal relations of the group. Certain advantages and disadvantages exist in the use of role playing as an educational method. The first question the leader must ask himself is whether or not role playing is an appropriate device when considered in the light of his teaching objectives and the character of the group. Sometimes we become preoccupied with an intriguing technique with little regard to its possible effects on learning.

Role playing can add a fresh interest to the subject under discussion, and the medium of dramatics sometimes gets points across when other methods fail to do so. The experience of playing a role enables the individual to identify with the problems of others and to understand the other person's position more realistically. When performed at its best and with skilled leadership, role playing can be an effective teaching device.

However, the leader needs to be aware of the hazards in role playing. Where a group includes individuals who are rivalrous, or antagonistic subgroups, or where a high degree of hostility exists, role playing can become an outlet for destructive feelings which affect the learning situation unfavorably. Even where the emotional feelings in the group are more favorable, the personal needs and drives of individuals can find expression in role playing in ways which are threatening or damaging to others.

The following excerpt from a group record portrays several points discussed here in relation to role playing. This incident took place in the group described earlier (See page 77), consisting of the three rivalrous male county directors, two women directors, and their respective casework staffs. Rivalry among the directors was at high pitch and the caseworkers felt subdued by the presence of their supervisors. The leader reports:

Thinking that the feeling of group unity had become stronger, I suggested we might try role playing of an application interview as a basis for discussion. Mr. P, a county director, readily volunteered to be the applicant; no one volunteered to be the worker. When Mr. K began putting pressure on one of his caseworkers to do this, I

¹⁵ Alan F. Klein: *Role Playing in Leadership Training and Group Problem Solving*. New York: Association Press, 1956. 176 pp. (p. 129). The author deals comprehensively with the subject—its use, values and dangers. The reader is referred to this source for further discussion of the subject.

intervened and asked Mrs. N (a field representative who had been forewarned about this possibility) to be the worker. Mr. P did an excellent job of presenting himself as a sullen, hostile applicant with vague physical complaints, either unwilling or unable to give any information about his situation and impatient with all the "red tape." Mrs. N took the part of a brusque and businesslike worker, in a hurry to get the interview over because of another appointment. This proved to be excellent material for discussion. Interest was high, with several members trying to talk at once.

The members asked for a re-playing of the scene with a different approach by the caseworker. This time the caseworker from Mr. K's county seemed to feel quite comfortable about playing the caseworker role, which she did, portraying herself as the kind of worker she really is—kindly but a little stiff and formal. This led to more discussion and proved very fruitful. Mr. P received much recognition for his dramatic ability and obviously gained much satisfaction. He thought we should continue role playing in our next session, and let others have the experience.

Mr. P seemed to view the opportunity for role playing as a dramatic rather than an educational one. Perhaps some relationship existed between Mr. P's selection of a hostile, ungiving client role and the fact that the worker's role was played by his field representative. Mr. P's feelings about authority had been revealed in other ways in the sessions, and so they probably would emerge in role playing. He used the opportunity to put the "worker" on the spot by making the interview as difficult as possible for her. In spite of this, however, the group seemed able to use this first experience positively as part of their learning.

Often in playing a role, an individual reveals things about himself which carry over as a basis for the group's diagnosis following the role playing. We sometimes hear the comment, "She *could* play that role. That's the way she really is." Sometimes the role played by an individual can carry over into reality in a way that he may find difficult to shed in his subsequent relations in the group.

The second attempt at role playing in this same group reveals another problem:

After the recess, I asked whether the group wanted to continue with this or to try the role playing of a home visit to "Mr. Smith," as had been suggested at the close of the last session. Mr. P and Mr. K heartily endorsed the idea and the others seemed to favor it.

This time role playing did not go so well. Mr. P suggested one of his workers, Mrs. E, for the role of Mrs. Smith, the applicant's wife. When no one volunteered to be the caseworker, he asked another of his workers, Mrs. Y, to do it. Though obviously reluctant, she complied. During the interview, she kept looking at Mr. P for approval and asked him questions about how she should handle the situation. Unexpectedly, Mr. P assumed the role of Mr. Smith and made himself a part of the interview. From that point on he stepped in and out of the role in the most disconcerting fashion. At the earliest opportunity, I suggested we stop for discussion. Interviewing methods came in for some discussion, with Mr. K being very argumentative. Everyone seemed strained and uncomfortable and glad to have the session end.

People can feel real discomfort about playing professional roles in the presence of their superiors. In both of the sessions recorded above, no one

volunteered to play the role of the caseworker and in the second session particularly, the pressure Mr. P put on his own caseworkers to participate obviously made them uncomfortable and anxious. No one wants to appear at a disadvantage before those whom they supervise or for whom they work.

Role playing to be successful calls for spontaneity and a fair degree of security on the part of the players. Mr. P added further to the difficulties in the second session by controlling the situation from the audience by injecting himself into the scene. Once a role playing situation gets under way, it is difficult to control and complications may arise before the leader can anticipate them. Role playing carries a higher potential for psychological hurts, bruised feelings, guilt over a display of hostility, or fear of exposure than is generally true for other media used in teaching. The leader has the responsibility for being sure that play-acting and interpretation around it are kept at surface level and at no time permits it to become personal or dangerously attacking. He must understand the psychological forces which motivate individuals in their role playing and handle these motivations constructively in relation to the educational purpose for which role playing is undertaken.

Sometimes the leader can help a group become more comfortable with the idea of role playing. One group leader tried several times to interest members in trying role playing but they remained resistant to the idea. In using a case, the leader, without any preliminary explanation, slipped into the role of the mother, saying to the group, "As Mrs. B, I'd like to ask a question." The leader then asked several questions designed to bring out attitudes, for example, "Why do you think I should ask my relatives to take care of my children?," "Why can't they be placed together in a foster home?" Before the group realized it, they were automatically playing the role of the caseworker interviewing Mrs. B. The leader reported that this sparked considerable discussion. Whenever opinions differed sharply, she became the leader again and asked the group to consider what it was they wanted to evaluate in the situation and what the caseworker's goal should be for this family. This experience did a great deal to relieve the group of their anxiety over role playing.

Klein lists the values and dangers of role playing in considerable detail,¹⁶ too numerous to include here. In addition to those values mentioned previously, Klein adds: role playing provides group members with an opportunity to learn by doing; people can be encouraged to say how they actually feel rather than saying what they want the leader to hear; the individual can explore his own feelings and gain insight into them. In considering the dangers, Klein points out that role playing requires adequate time and planning to be useful; it is a method, not an end in itself; it should be at the level of understanding and maturity of the group; it is not advisable to use role playing as a skills-practice device or insight-giving process if the person's boss or his subordinates are present; it must be kept clear of therapy, and the group guided away from psychodramatic situations that will result in personal exposure; if the leader

¹⁶ Klein. See footnote, p. 138.

does not know the group, he must watch that he is not used by the group to put someone on the spot.

Audio-visual aids

Audio-visual aids have many uses in group thinking and can be employed effectively in conjunction with any of the three methods of group deliberation—lecture, discussion, or a combination of the two. Agencies reported rather frequent use of audio-visual aids, although, in general, they lacked awareness of how to integrate their use with the educational process and objectives.

Films were used more frequently than any other type of visual aids. The use of films in teaching is a subject in itself and helpful guides have been prepared by various agencies and organizations which stress specific criteria for the use of films as an educational device. Certainly for training groups, the same principles would hold as for all other aspects of learning. Selection, purpose, preparation, and skilled leadership in the introduction and discussion of a film would be paramount considerations.

One group reported the use of a flannelgraph to illustrate visually certain processes and techniques in the interviewing process. The use of this device permits the presentation of many different types of information and knowledge and makes it possible to show a problem organizationally in such a way as to stimulate the group's participation.

Use of tape recordings were reported in a small number of groups. The most successful use of this medium seemed to be in the group which played back the tape recording of an interview for discussion and provided the members with copies of the transcribed interview for reference. When tape recordings are good, they give life and reality to the situation and reveal feeling tones and voice inflections that the written record can rarely provide. Exhibits and slides were mentioned by one group as adding considerable interest to a discussion on institutional management.

No full discussion of audio-visual materials can be attempted here and the responses from the data do not warrant it. Their use should be on the basis of determined educational goals and they must be used differentially with respect to the teaching and learning objectives.

Group Interaction in Collective Thinking¹⁷

Group interaction as a phenomenon in collective thinking has many facets. Some of these have been present in other aspects of group process

¹⁷ The frame of reference for this and other sections in this chapter is drawn from *Categories for the Description of the Group Process*, School of Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University, 1956. (mimeographed).

already discussed, but the deliberative process itself creates a different set of interacting forces which need to be identified and understood.

Emotional elements in the thinking process

Collective thinking grows out of group interaction. It is the way a group thinks together. But it is the individuals within the group who possess the capacities and qualities which bring about collective thinking. Injected into this thinking process are a variety of emotional elements some of which stem from the environment and others from the individuals themselves. These need to be distinguished in the leadership of groups since they require different handling.

For example, in a workshop on how to lead institutes, planned by a State office for a group of district supervisors, there was strong resistance among the members to accepting the educational goals of the training project. This resistance was based in large part on an event which immediately preceded the workshop sessions. An agency reorganization had removed administrative responsibility previously carried by this group of staff and had placed it with a new classification of position higher in the administrative hierarchy, district directors. The supervisors felt they were being "displaced" organizationally, with an accompanying loss of status. Their emotional block to learning the new skills expected of them was a natural outgrowth of this experience.

The leader's approach in this instance was to try to remove the road-block through encouraging the members to express their feelings and by interpreting the agency's point of view. The leader's report of the four meetings of this group shows a gradual abatement of the members' emotional tension and their ultimate willingness to work on the task:

During the first session the members' participation was rigid and their comments academic and rather superficial; during the second, they expressed real feeling about their "loss of status," and "displacement." Some members frankly admitted their resistance to reorganization and their frustration because they felt "overlooked and ignored" by the State office.

During the third session, members invested more constructive effort in trying to analyze the causes of their difficulty. Several recognized that agency climate, rather than basic administrative problems, was the major contributor to current breakdowns. The fourth session seemed the most positive as the entire group focused upon "where do we go from here?" Earlier, the members had resisted discussing principles and methods of supervision. Now they expressed a strong interest in having opportunities to develop their professional skills. They volunteered to send to the State office their evaluation of what the current series of workshops had meant to them and their suggestions on future planning. They were interested in meeting with the newly appointed district directors to discuss job responsibilities and interrelationships, although previously they had shrugged aside such a meeting.

Although this report does not reflect group process, the leader apparently was consciously handling the resistance and hostility caused by the change in administrative responsibilities. As their hostility receded, the group became more accessible for teaching and learning. But the fact that two out of the four scheduled meetings had to be devoted, in part, to helping the group members

get to the point where they could actually "hear" and "take in" the objectives and content on which the workshop was based demonstrates the impact of emotional elements on learning.

The learning problems of a group of new public assistance workers reflected the effects of a different source of emotional tension. In this instance, the leader observed that during the month the group was in the training center, the members were careful not to reveal their own feelings, biases, and attitudes, but were very vocal concerning their clients' attitudes and behavior. Here the emotional blocking seemed to come from inner anxiety on the part of the workers. The displacement of their feelings on the clients was a first and necessary step in learning to look at themselves. In teaching such a group, a leader would have to understand the dynamics at work.

The "lay" attitudes of new, untrained workers may be highly charged with emotion and when the learning situation makes it clear that they will be expected to change these attitudes, the threat to them is often too great to permit them to move directly toward the educational goal. Even prior to the first meeting of such a group, the leader should anticipate the educational problem and be prepared to help the group understand that their reactions and feelings are normal under the circumstances. But if learning is to take place, the teaching process must go beyond this to helping the members move back from their attacks on the behavior of clients to an examination of their own attitudes. An *intellectual* acceptance on the part of the members of the use of certain casework concepts as a requirement in the agency's function and services may have to be the first goal in the learning process. The degree of emotional resistance and an assessment of how far each individual can go in relinquishing his earlier patterns is a part of the "running diagnosis" the leader must constantly engage in during the teaching process.

Sometimes a combination of inner and outer influences create emotional reactions in learning. A reduction in training personnel in a certain agency had resulted in the field representatives being asked to take on part of the training function (See page 91). In this situation, the staff's emotional resistance to accepting such a responsibility was strong. The members insisted that becoming "group teachers" was not part of their function. During the discussions, part of their insecurity and anxiety were displaced on what they termed the agency's failure to clarify new policies and administrative responsibilities generally. Apparently some justification existed for this second criticism.

The leader responded to the outward expression of protest by calling in resource people from the State office to discuss problems in this area with the group. While this discussion undoubtedly increased the members' understanding and knowledge of the policy content they were expected to teach, it also took away one of their defenses to learning a task which was fraught with anxiety for them. The explanations by the resource people unquestionably needed to be included as part of the educational content for this group, but the immediate problem was one of understanding diagnostically the source of the members' emotional feeling and resistance and dealing with that rather than with the external problems on which the group obviously was projecting their resent-

ment. At first the members projected all of their hostility on the State office but were able as the discussions went along to express their own feelings of inadequacy in having to conduct training groups. Only when this point had been reached was the group able to ask for help and to settle down to the assigned task.

Certain emotional responses might be expected to be fairly characteristic of the group setting itself. The individual begins to test the situation to see what he can expect from others as well as from himself. This initial phase seems to be directed toward establishing how comfortable or uncomfortable he is going to feel in the group setting. Semrad and Arsenian observed that no matter how democratically the leader defines the work load or the task, usually some resistance occurs. They suggest that this may be because the group member senses some sacrifice of his individuality and realizes he will be exposed to pressure to accommodate others.¹⁸ During this adjustment or testing-out period, emotional sets can be formed which may continue throughout the group's existence. If this early resistance is recognized as an emotional symptom which is a natural part of becoming a member of a group, and a positive attitude is taken toward understanding it, a great deal can be done to resolve the resistance and to get the group off to a good start.

The emotional elements in the thinking process are so all pervasive that knowing where they begin and end is impossible. We can depend on their being a part of the learning of each individual and a major component in interaction. The diagnostic awareness on the part of the leader of the origin of emotional elements in the group and how they are affecting interaction is of course vital to successful teaching.

Communication as Related to Group Thinking

"Communication" is an elusive term because of its many meanings in our modern society. In groups convened for educational purposes, communication can be described as the process by which "meaning" is passed from one person to another or to others in the group. A breakdown in communication is usually more apparent than is its successful functioning.

Communication is a hard process to isolate; it is "rarely brought to view," unless it is obstructed or conflict becomes apparent.¹⁹ Leaders often know intuitively when they are not communicating effectively with the group or the members are failing to communicate with one another. Several important points in relation to communication should be called to the attention of those who lead training groups. The leader has the responsibility for being alert to what

¹⁸ Semrad and Arsenian. See footnote, p. 117.

¹⁹ Alfred H. Stanton and Morris S. Schwartz: *The Mental Hospital: A Study of Institutional Participation in Psychiatric Illness and Treatment*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1954. xx, 492 pp. (p. 193).

factors operate to prevent good communication and what ones can be employed to foster it.

Communication may be either verbal or non-verbal. Certain factors condition the nature and quality of the communicative process. Verbal communication, as the term implies, is achieved through the use of language, which "as the common carrier of human intercourse" is often the determiner of organized effort.²⁰ Language can represent a barrier to communication in the literal sense when the language being used is unfamiliar or difficult for someone to understand who is trying to use a language foreign to him. While such difficulties can be very real obstacles to communication among group members and between members and the leader, invariably they are recognized for what they are and usually members help one another in the understanding of what is being said. Language as a factor in communication has other aspects, however, which are not quite so amenable to solution. Grace Coyle writes that "people who speak the same language may yet find it difficult to communicate because of a divergence of ways of viewing things; differences of tradition and background can produce such differences in modes of thought as to make communication almost impossible."

In relation to the use of words, Ogden and Richards point out that words must be thought of in two senses—*denoting* and *connoting*—as they are employed in group communication.²¹ Words take on connotations out of the settings in which they are used. Both leader and members of a group must be aware of what meanings get attached to words as a result of group discussion. The leader must be multilingual in the sense of understanding what meaning the various contributions have for individuals.

This has particular significance for training groups which are formed in public welfare settings. For one thing, the diversity in such groups resulting from differences in professional education can erect barriers to effective communication. In part, this is due to the fact that often staff members with graduate social work preparation and those without it represent differences in their ways of thinking and expression. Group members who are professionally educated often use a "language" that is totally unfamiliar to individuals not acquainted with the particular social work concepts. This can cause misunderstanding between the person expressing the ideas and those receiving them. Under such circumstances, the connotation of words or ideas may be quite different for each group. This same breakdown of communication can occur when the leader uses the language of the profession without regard to the educational needs of the members of the group who are at a different level of comprehension.

A similar lack of communication can arise out of difference in the levels of generalization made either by the leader or the professionally sophisticated

²⁰ Grace L. Coyle: *Social Process in Organized Groups*. New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930. xiv, 245 pp. (p. 24).

²¹ C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards: *The Meaning of Meaning. A Study of the Influence of Language Upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1936. xxii, 363 pp. (p. 111).

in the group. When such concepts as "self-determination," "human need," or "behavior is purposeful" are referred to, they carry a specific set of connotations for those who have been educated to their origin and use. In many training groups which include staffs with and without professional education, these abstract concepts are often assumed to carry the same connotation for all learners. This can very definitely break down communication between the two groups of staff members and might in turn provoke many negative interactions. When such educational differences exist in the group, the leader must see that these concepts are dealt with at a less abstract level that is more in keeping with the experience and orientation of the members who lack professional education.

The following excerpt from a training session illustrates some of these problems. No one in this group had professional training and the membership included caseworkers, supervisors and county directors:

The subject of this meeting was services to unmarried mothers. As an introduction, I (group leader) briefly reviewed our changing philosophy about work with unmarried mothers. I mentioned the difficulty in being objective in dealing with such situations and turned to the group with the question why was this so. They brought out the attitude of the community toward illegitimacy, the amount of feeling about sex and morals.

I pointed out the tendency of an individual to identify either with the mother who wants her baby, or with adoptive applicants who want babies, etc. We all start out with a bias in one direction or another and instead of clinging to a prejudice either that all illegitimate babies should be placed or that all unwed mothers should keep their babies, we must learn to look at each individual circumstance.

Mrs. A and Miss B raised a question about a very young unmarried mother they thought was incapable of making a decision or of caring for her child. I agreed that some situations require protective action through the court but this differs from saying that no unmarried mother has the right to decide what will become of her baby just because she is an unmarried mother.

We then discussed why girls have babies out of wedlock. Mr. C thought sexual experimentation of young people these days had something to do with it. The members brought out the adolescent's desire to "rate with the gang," his tendency to act on impulse, and the effects of an unhappy family life. They considered the statement in the manual that illegitimate pregnancy is a "symptom of inner unhappiness" and I encouraged them to express their doubts about this if they wished. They decided that if this means "inner confusion," they would agree with it.

We talked about a few typical patterns of unhappy family experiences, such as the rejected child, the child with no family ties, the girl with the over-dominating mother. I then summarized this discussion, adding some reassurance that we didn't have to be psychoanalysts to understand the unconscious motivation of each unmarried mother. I suggested that a certain attitude on the part of the worker would be helpful to any unwed mother. I asked them to describe what this attitude would be. Miss B mentioned sympathy and understanding. Mrs. A added "strength," explaining

she meant assurance of agency help and support, not the promise to solve all her problems. Mrs. F added respect for confidentiality.

Up to this point the discussion had seemed comfortable and the group had shown understanding and tolerance of the unwed mother. A definite change gradually took place in the afternoon session.

We began by reading and discussing some brief case material of a first interview with an unmarried mother, who at first told a false story of being deserted by her husband, and then as she gained confidence in the worker, broke down and told the true story. There was some discussion of the defenses of the unmarried mother, but on the whole, the group did not react positively to this case and didn't seem too interested in it. They thought it was not realistic for the mother to have changed her story so fast. I had the feeling that the whole thing seemed a little "phony" to them. Looking back, I think I didn't give them sufficient preparation for this material.

At lunch Mrs. E, who is quite shy in the group, asked me what to do about an ADC mother who has more than one illegitimate child. I suggested she bring this up for discussion in the afternoon session. When she did, other people cited similar examples and attitudes became more judgmental. I tried to get this related to our morning's discussion on why girls became unmarried mothers. Someone brought out that ADC mothers, too, want to be loved and some live a drab existence, but the attitude of the group never became really understanding and sympathetic.

Further evidence of how the feeling in the group had changed came out in our discussion of helping the mother with her decision about the baby. Mrs. A asked thoughtfully under what circumstances might it be a sound plan for a mother to keep her baby. Miss B quickly and emphatically declared "*Never!*" apparently seeing no connection between this and our earlier discussion of looking at people as individuals. Miss F questioned the suggestion in the manual that ADC might be discussed with the unmarried mother as a resource. She thought that living on ADC was not a sound plan and that this just encouraged dependency. The group agreed with this, and there were murmurs of approval about keeping people from becoming dependent.

In retrospect, I can see several factors affecting the group's attitude here. In the morning, they had been thinking primarily of the adolescent unmarried mother—the young girl who has made a mistake and comes to the agency for help. When they thought of the ADC mother, they visualized an older woman who had had two or three out-of-wedlock children with no apparent remorse. They found this instance much harder to accept. Moreover, this case touched on their feelings about dependency and people "who just have more children for the public to support," a subject on which they are sensitive because of public criticism.

Since it was near the end of the session, I debated with myself momentarily whether to get into the subject of dependency, but I had such a feeling of urgency—this was an opportunity and I *must* get something across—so I plunged in, even though I knew there would not be enough time for free discussion. Looking back, it is obvious this was a mistake. I just "poured it on," differentiating between emotional and economic dependency, pointing out that we all take help in one form or another, etc. Some of my own frustration probably crept in, and was one of the factors separating me from the group at this point. Suddenly I realized that the entire group was solidly lined up on one side and I on the other. Actually the tone of the group

never became openly antagonistic. The members expressed their feelings mostly in laughter and remarks such as a rejoinder to someone "you don't really expect to do everything it says in the manual, do you?" Fortunately, I suddenly realized what was happening, laughed with them at my own zeal, and admitted that we could not solve the problem of dependency today. We ended on a positive note, making plans for our next meeting.

The leader of this group has provided us with a one-way screen through which to examine some of the points discussed. In the first place, the leader seems aware of the problems in communicating with a group that had so little familiarity with or acceptance of the basic concepts of casework. Her language is uncomplicated and is related to where the group members were in their experiences. The one example of conceptual abstraction came from the agency manual and the group had difficulty with what was meant by "symptom of inner unhappiness." The leader helped the members to spell out what this meant in their own "language."

This group also illustrates a breakdown in communication between the leader and the group growing out of a miscalculation on the part of the leader as to the degree of comprehension and acceptance by the members of ideas discussed in the group.

The group was using a different frame of reference for the "young girl who gets into trouble" than they were for the "immoral ADC mother." The leader herself reported that the earlier responses of the group had lulled her into thinking that they were accepting the problem of illegitimacy in its totality, so she was unprepared for their later outburst.

The leader's anxiety and concern over the behavior of the group caused her to revert to a higher level of abstraction in her discussion of "dependency" as a concept than the group was capable of comprehending. The leader's own realization of the breakdown in communication enabled her to recover her own equilibrium and that of the group.

The problems around non-verbal communication are equally subtle and influential. Failure or inability of some individuals in groups to communicate psychologically is a well known phenomenon. This of course is related to any number of other factors which influence the individual's position in the group—his own insecurity, the presence of authority, attitude of the group toward him, his personality difficulties, anxiety over not knowing, etc. While this problem is often expressed through withdrawal and isolation of the individual from the group, it may also be present when the individual is actively vocal in the group. In one of the groups reported on, the greatest threat to the group's effective functioning was the oldest member, an extremely compulsive talker, who frequently used "verbiage" that was either difficult or impossible for the rest of the group to translate. The leader commented that since this difficulty was of long standing, some of the members accepted it, others laughed, and a few became more aggressive than they might have in other situations. In this instance, the problem was not only one of communication between this member and the group, but her compulsive talking was disruptive to the group's deliberation. Before a second meeting of the group, the leader talked with this

member and suggested that she and some of the other members with long experience give the rest of the group more opportunity to speak.

When the group member is so psychologically blocked in his communication that he becomes an "isolate" in the group, the problem is just as serious. One of the aims of the leader is to bring about full productivity in the group. Where members appear reluctant or resistant to participation, the reasons can be varied and the leader needs to discover, or at least surmise, what these are as a first step toward working on ways of helping them overcome the problem. Other staff members can sometimes help bring such members into the group.

One leader described a group which included several fringe members who persisted in remaining outside the main stream of group discussion. Also in the group were some members who had little to say but said it well. The leader realized that these members frequently were the spokesmen for the less articulate members, largely because their contributions were so simply stated, that the fringe members could follow their discussion and proceed eventually to some observations of their own. Once a leader is conscious of such a problem and the potential resources in the group for dealing with it, he can use such resources partially in facilitating and strengthening communication in the group.

Non-verbal communication is based to a high degree on the interpretation of signs. Ogden and Richards state that "our interpretation of any sign is our psychological reaction to it, as determined by our past experience in similar situations, and by our present experience."²² Communication as a process and the problems which can grow from it is, then, a highly important area in the deliberation of a group. The leader needs to be aware of the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the process and the factors which can facilitate or block communication in teaching and learning.

Interaction of Subgroups and Status Ranking

In discussing interpersonal relations, we looked at the ways in which subgroups and status ranking emerge in groups and the significance of such patterns for achievement of goals. In groups with an educational purpose, these patterns of behavior logically get expressed in large part through the group's deliberative process. With the material in interpersonal relations in mind, the application of it to particular instances of group deliberation will better serve to reveal these phenomena in action.

The previous process record on the group of county staffs who discussed illegitimacy, provides some illustration of the influence of subgroups and status ranking on the thinking of the group. The key people in this group were Miss B and Miss F, the natural leaders of the group, and Mrs. A who was a rival to both of them. This group represented a combination of supervisors and

²² Ogden and Richards. See footnote, p. 145.

supervisees (county directors and supervisors and the caseworkers directly under their supervision) which greatly increased the status problems of the group. The county directors carried prestige in the group by virtue of their official positions and, within their own ranks, their status was further influenced by the length of time they had been in the agency. Miss F had status on both counts and spoke for the group. Miss B, the director with the greatest seniority and the personal approbation of the group, represented and reinforced the lay attitudes revealed in her remarks. Judging by the reactions of this group in the latter half of the session, Miss B could be assumed to represent accurately the feelings of the group. A second possibility, of course, is that certain members did not agree with Miss B's attitudes, but because of their fear of disapproval or unwillingness to engage in verbal conflict, preferred to remain quiet. This presents an equally difficult problem in group deliberation. If any of the caseworkers in the group were questioning the punitive attitudes expressed by the higher status members, they would have to have considerable courage to say so. On the other hand, workers who experienced these attitudes in their daily supervision on the job might be inclined to agree with them in the group.

Mrs. A, the one person in the group who gave promise of being able to raise the sights of the members, was not permitted to do so by the group. When the feelings and attitudes in a group are fairly well consolidated, the efforts of one member to change them may be resented. This would be particularly true where the contributions of the individual implied criticism of the group's beliefs and aroused their guilt in relation to them. While the group permitted Mrs. A to contribute in the early sessions, apparently she later became identified in the minds of the members with the leader who expressed similar ideas about understanding people and casework concepts. What the quality of the group's thinking would have been had Miss F and Miss B, the indigenous leaders, held the views which the leader was hoping to inculcate in the group can only be surmised. But even in situations such as this where the "example" set for the group by the indigenous leaders is a destructive and negative one, group members who are positively motivated may learn in spite of it. The individual can at times strengthen his own convictions without exposing himself to attack, and his lack of participation cannot necessarily be taken as resisting learning. In this instance, for example, he might absorb what the leader was trying to get across rather than going along with the contrasting attitudes of his colleagues.

The powerful influence of the subgroup of Miss F and Miss B, the lower status ranking of Mrs. A whose knowledge and point of view might have helped to bring about a change in the group's attitude; the status ranking problems arising from the combination of caseworkers with their directors; and the level of understanding of the members were all potent factors in the outcome of collective thinking in this group.

The creation of subgroups and status ranking in a group is an inevitable process. The question is one of evaluating the basis on which such choices are made. Subgroups may be supportive and facilitating or disruptive and hostile. At times, healthy conflict provides the way for working out issues

and reaching new decisions. In some instances, subgroups represent values which the leader himself is aiming to effect.²³ What Mary Follett calls "constructive conflict" or "friction of mind on mind" is a good thing.²⁴ That both positive and negative currents resulting from subgroups and ranking phenomena are inherent in every group is the reality which the leader must keep diagnostically in mind.

Elements of authority in the conduct of groups

Like the ranking process, authority inevitably exists or develops as a factor in group deliberation. Its appearance in agency training groups may stem from four sources—authority which is attached to individual members by virtue of their official status in the hierarchy; authority which is bestowed upon selected individuals because of what they represent to the group; attitudes toward authority on the part of individuals in the group; and the authority of leadership vested in the leader as the person responsible for an organized educational activity.

Just as authority derived from official status is a factor to be taken into account in the formation of groups and in understanding the interpersonal relations which form, so, too, is it a potent influence in group thinking and deliberation. It was very much in evidence, for example, in the record of the group of county directors and their staffs who met to discuss the child welfare manual. The attitudes held by Miss F and Miss B were greatly strengthened by the fact that they represented authority to the caseworkers in the group.

The authority of expertness, or a similar role of authority, assigned to selected individuals by the group is seen by the members as essential to the productivity and movement of the group. Such authority is usually bestowed willingly, although, as we witnessed in the case of Mrs. A, the group may withdraw such designation if the individual's use of it makes the members uncomfortable or if they feel it is no longer needed.

The individual's conscious and unconscious attitudes toward authority based on his past experiences definitely enters into his behavior in the group. This is true for members and leader alike. If the individual's childhood experiences with authority have been negative or destructive, he may be subservient, conforming, rebellious, aggressive, or fearful. On the other hand, if he has had positive, constructive experiences with authority in his own family relationships, he will be better able to accept the control of the group and to lend himself in a mature way to its deliberations. The group member who challenges the authority of the leader may be doing so out of his own aggressive tendencies or he may be verbalizing the group's feeling about a leader who is himself authoritative.

When an individual's negative feelings toward authority are combined

²³ Grace L. Coyle: *Group Work with American Youth*. New York: Harper, 1948. viii, 270 pp. (p. 121).

²⁴ Mary P. Follett: *Dynamic Administration*. Edited by H. C. Metcalf and L. Urwick. New York: Harper, 1950. 320 pp. (p. 30).

with power which comes with his position in the group, the results can be destructive, indeed. In a meeting of county directors, held for the purpose of planning a series of training meetings for their staffs, a "triumvirate" of three men directors made its appearance, with Mr. K as its undisputed leader.

Mr. K, a county director, has a Statewide reputation as a rugged individualist and a strong resister of State supervision. Among county directors, he is admired and perhaps envied. Others who have had conflicts with him on intercounty matters ardently dislike him, but he is considered a person of influence. Stocky and short of stature with a blunt way of speaking, he looks and acts the role of a small dictator. In the group at this meeting he also had status because he comes from the largest urban county represented.

The leader began by presenting material on the purpose of the group meetings to be planned for local staffs. She emphasized the large variety of responsibilities carried by the directors, including supervision. She referred to the problem the directors had in orienting and supervising new and inexperienced staff; then brought out that some of this teaching can be done by group methods, that certain things are best taught that way while others must be taught by individual supervision. Everyone seemed interested and responsive to this.

During this presentation, Mr. K came in late and had to be introduced. In reviewing what had gone before for the benefit of Mr. K, the leader mentioned the plan for local workshops for county staffs. Mr. K promptly indicated his lack of interest in this idea. Mr. L tried to defend it and explained its purpose. Mr. K brushed this aside, and spoke dogmatically against the workers being away from the office that long.

After his first attempt at protest, Mr. L never again objected to anything Mr. K said. He continued to talk but not nearly as much as was his custom, and what he said was always in support of Mr. K's views. Mr. S, although he continued to talk as much as usual, was always on the same side as Mr. K and never supported the opposite view. From this point on, the discussion on every issue followed the same general pattern. The leader would raise a question for discussion by the group; Mr. K would state his emphatic opinion; Mr. S and Mr. L would support it. The other three directors remained silent. When the view seemed open to question or to require more exploration, the leader would raise a question, but once Mr. K had stated his position, he never altered it in any detail.

The above illustration shows the control which can be exercised by a person who has official authority and, in addition has tremendous personal drive for gratification in this area. Here also is a vivid example of a subgroup in action. Mr. K headed a subgroup with two acquiescent followers and his power was so great that he was able not only to control them, but to shut out the other three directors from the group discussion.

This case also brings out the problem of social control in the group and the relationship of authority to leadership. As this leader pointed out in her report, the authority inherent in her position as a member of the State staff enabled her to point out that while she would take into account all the suggestions coming from the group and that the State office would want their participation in planning the local meetings, there could be no question of not holding them, since they were an essential part of the agency's staff development pro-

gram. What is perhaps more important was the leader's ability to do this in an objective and non-retaliatory way. Without this positive use of control by the leader, this group could not have reached its goal.

Homans develops the phenomenon of social control in the group on the theme of Mary Follett's statement that the group's interacting *is* the control. It is not something which is set up separately. "We get control through effective integration. Authority should arise within the unifying process."²⁵ This concept places considerable responsibility on the leader to understand the forces at work in the group. Certainly the leader's own attitudes toward, feelings about, and use of authority will in turn affect the group's responses in the same area. Control is not necessarily restrictive but is directive. In order to achieve democratic control, every group, whatever its purpose, must develop "some form of government, some aspect of leadership and authority, some control over its members."²⁶ The need for government in small groups rests on the simple necessity for the control and pruning of individual impulse, coordination of powers and interests of each in the pursuit of collective ends.

It is incumbent upon the group leader to discover his function in relation to group government. Where the avowed purpose of the group is an educational one, the members "voluntarily submit themselves to the authority of the teacher." In such groups, the authority which is vested in the leader may be exercised positively for the group through the use of controls which are highly appropriate to the purposes of the group. In training groups, these controls would be concerned with the establishment of agenda, the arrangement of subject matter, the division of task responsibility, and the goals of the agency.

The leader who is himself fearful of authority or does not understand its significance may seek to circumvent it or deny its existence by attempting to remove it from the group by artificial means. For example, where a group is made up of workers, supervisors, and administrators, or where Federal, regional and State staffs are combined in the same group, the technique of introducing the members by first names or nicknames as a way of eliminating the hierarchal influence and placing the group's relationships on an informal level will not remove the authority which is vested in the respective members and will not eliminate the group's curiosity or knowledge about who is who. Where groups have been accustomed to meeting together and informal relationships are well established, this problem of disguising status does not arise.

From the point of view of the members themselves, when an individual attends a group, he expects to accept certain controls and authority as a part of helping the group accomplish its purpose. Individuals need to have a clear understanding of the roles assigned to them in the group, of their rights and responsibilities. As people responsible for an educational process, group leaders need to be aware of the basic attitudes toward authority, the behavior by which these attitudes manifest themselves, and the capacity of the group for co-

²⁵ George C. Homans: *The Human Group*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950. xxvi, 484 pp. (p. 290).

²⁶ Coyle. See footnote, p. 151.

ordinated effort toward common goals. The following questions can be used as guides to the leader's observations in this area:

What stage of development has this group reached in its capacity to control its members in the interest of accomplishing its purpose?

What community forces or conditions affect its development of effective democratic control? What significant individual drives and needs are evident within the group which are determining its methods of dealing with authority?

What regulations, limitations or controls are imposed by the agency within which the leader as its representative has to function?²⁷

Values as determinants in collective thinking

Two aspects of the subject of values seem especially pertinent to this discussion. They are (1) the influence of reference groups on individual and group values and (2) the task of re-education in relation to values.

Homans, in explaining reference groups, points out that a group has a boundary and outside this boundary lies the group's environment and the relationship between the group and the environment is circular.²⁸ It is in this outside environment that reference groups exist. They may be formal or informal groups to which members belong or they may be groups which have power or influence in the environment and thus affect the individuals who attend the training group. In either case, such groups bear "reference" to or influence the interaction which takes place in the specific group.

Since values are subject to a "constant osmosis in the surrounding culture," in the process of being derived from a variety of reference groups, they may at times present conflict for the individuals or groups who hold them. This is an extremely important point in a social structure such as that represented by public welfare agencies throughout the country. At any one time, county or city agency staffs, for example, may feel the impact of several spheres of influence in relation to the social values which the agency represents. The most direct influence is that of the surrounding community. Other reference groups, although more distant geographically, nevertheless carry considerable weight in the enforcement of values at the local level. State departments of public welfare and Federal bureaus represent such reference groups. As long as values among the various reference groups are in harmony, no conflict ensues and progress toward an increasingly higher set of values can be pursued. But such a favorable situation rarely exists, since values have a high emotional component and are not necessarily rational or related to an intellectual evaluation.

Conflicts arising from the presence of reference groups are described as follows: "Within the mind of each member as he participates in the group there goes on continuously an intricate adjustment of psychological forces. He

²⁷ Coyle. See footnote, p. 151.

²⁸ Homans. See footnote, p. 153.

is affected not only by pressures that reach him from his associated activity in the organization, or that rise from within his own consciousness, but also by the necessity of adjusting his relationship to a variety of groups.”²⁹ This author also points out that an individual at the point of intersection of such group circles must integrate ideas and values in a way that will allow him to function effectively in each organization. Some individuals are able to adjust to conflict group demands by developing dual systems of behavior, in which they believe one way and act another.

The impact of the local community as a reference group is illustrated by the following group record:

During the twenty years of its existence, this agency has had quite a lot of unfavorable publicity. Last year, the local papers ran frequent stories about an investigation of the county welfare department to determine how many “chiselers” were on the rolls. While no evidence of actual fraud was found, the local commissioners thought the agency policies had been too generous in some instances. The commissioners interrogated at least one of the caseworkers individually and left the staff with a feeling that they had no confidence in them.

This county staff has very little professional leverage in its own ranks and in their discussions individuals display a punitive and restrictive attitude toward clients. One very important factor in the situation is the fact that all members of the staff have grown up in the county and are much affected by the values it represents.

The strong feeling of insecurity in this staff, their feeling of being attacked by the community and their lack of any sense of support from their director had been made clear in previous training meetings. Today’s subject, “absent fathers,” particularly aroused these feelings. Presently their local paper had carried an editorial severely criticizing the agency for not prosecuting non-support cases more promptly and aggressively. It seemed important, therefore, for the State department to give them a sense of support rather than having them feel they were being pushed into a position by the State office where they would get even more criticism.

After a brief summary of our last session, I introduced the subject of absent fathers and raised the question why this subject is so charged with feeling. I alluded to the local newspaper story and to other similar attacks in other places, pointing out how general this kind of emotional reaction is.

Mrs. T was first to respond and the others quickly joined in. They described the feeling of resentment the wage earner who works hard every day and has to pay taxes to help support the family feels toward a man who takes it easy. The group was apparently expressing their own feelings as well as those of the man on the street . . . Mrs. M brought out that the law enforcement officers or public officials sometimes tell them to “cut the family off” without suggesting any plan for caring for the children. I acknowledged this problem, and tried to give them material they could use in interpretation to the public. I discussed the manual policies and laws relating to the absent parent, recognizing how difficult it is to be “in the middle,” receiving criticism and pressure to give assistance or to withhold it. I pointed out that a thorough knowledge of the manual policies and laws and the reasons for them helps us to steer a straight course. As we continued the discussion of the legal

²⁹ Grace L. Coyle: *Social Process in Organized Groups*. New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930. xiv, 245 pp. (p. 35).

procedures, the punitive attitudes of this group showed up in several places. I had the feeling that their attitudes and the community's attitudes were closer together than their attitudes and the State's attitudes.

As indicated by the leader, all of the members of this county staff were local people and their entire life and work experience had been in that community. Although they felt the strong disapproval of the community, based in part on several investigations of the agency, their real conflict lay in the fact that in carrying out the policies of their agency, they had to go contrary to the feelings and wishes of the community. The community, as represented by the county commissioners, attorney, and others, wanted the staff to be more restrictive, while the State department wanted them to be more liberal. This staff group was actually torn between two reference groups and felt hostility toward both.

An additional handicap for this staff group was its lack of resources for acquiring a higher set of values. They were so embedded in the community that their values were the community's values and they resented the efforts of the State to make them change. When they had to make a choice, their allegiance was to the community, since to go counter to local values, would have brought even greater disapproval and rejection.

The leader recognized that the educational goals for this group would have to be a long, gradual process, since the punitive values of the community were definitely reflected in their thinking. The immediate goal was to strengthen the morale of the group from the inside so they would be able to stand against the community when needed, not in an aggressive way, but with patience and understanding. This community was devoid of other reference groups, such as an organization of social workers or a progressive citizens' group, which might have provided leverage for the staff to acquire more progressive values. Sometimes leverage can come from the outside. In this instance, the training supervisor realized, as the sessions went on, that it would have been better to combine this county staff with other more progressive groups within the agency rather than holding training sessions with them alone. Exposure of the members to the more liberal values of other counties perhaps would have had some educational effect on this group.

The second aspect of the problem of values is concerned with the re-educative task to be undertaken with staffs whose own values and attitudes must change to be in harmony with the responsibilities they carry. The group record in the section on the discussion method³⁰ can be used as a basis for examining the re-educative process in helping members to acquire a different set of social values.

As the avowed values stated in public welfare legislation and policy are examined, the educational lag between the values now held by a large number of staff and those put forward by Federal and State agencies as expected goals, becomes clear and in some ways disturbing. Many of the groups reported by leaders, dealt with the primary concepts of "fair and equal treatment for all,"

³⁰ See p. 123.

"confidentiality," "the right to apply," the "right to self-determination" and the "right of appeal." The lag in relation to these concepts is disturbing because the educational process by which a change in values is brought about is often an exceedingly slow and difficult one. Learning the agency's policies and procedures is not enough; what we are asking public welfare staffs to do in terms of the services rendered actually involves, for most people, a change in attitudes and behavior. The following quote from Lewin and Grabbe is both encouraging and steadying in its implications:

Re-education influences conduct only when the new system of values and beliefs dominates the individual's perception. The acceptance of the new system is linked with the acceptance of a specific group, a particular role, a definite source of authority, a new point of reference. It is basic for re-education that this linkage between acceptance of new facts or values and acceptance of certain groups or roles is very intimate and that the second frequently is a pre-requisite for the first. This explains the difficulty of changing belief and values in a piecemeal fashion. This linkage is a main factor behind resistance to re-education, but can also be made a powerful means for re-education.³¹

Leadership Skills in Group Deliberation

Within this context leadership is not dealt with as separate concept in group process. Rather leadership is thought of as an inherent part of the total group process, not something which exists apart from it. For this reason, the implications for leadership have been incorporated in each subject area as it has been presented.

Before moving into leadership skill in group deliberation, perhaps we should look back at the leadership function as defined in the formal group. Within a formal group structure, such as a training group, there must be a *specified* leader, whose functions in turn are specifically defined by the nature of the task. Although the leader, under these circumstances, does not arise *spontaneously* from the membership of the group, he must be accepted by the individuals in the group or his function as leader will be severely restricted. The one inalienable characteristic of group leaders is their *ability to coordinate the efforts and activities of the people in the group*.³²

Jennings elaborates on this leadership role by pointing out that instead of defining a leader in terms of the possession of certain status traits, leadership is defined as a function of interpersonal relations, dependent upon the complex give-and-take between members of the group.³³

The group leader in the staff training situation needs to have competence

³¹ Lewin and Grabbe, p. 64. See footnote, p. 125.

³² Leadership and Authority in the Local Community. *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*, Summer-Autumn 1952, 7, p. 27.

³³ Helen H. Jennings: *Leadership and Isolation*. New York: Longmans, Green, 1950. xvii, 349 pp. (p. 164-205).

in three areas—in content, as represented by the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be taught; in the basic principles and methods of education as they apply in adult professional learning; and in the concepts and skills of group process as utilized in educational groups. This is a high standard and few educators, in agencies or schools, have yet achieved competence in all three areas. For one thing, not enough provision is made for the training of group-teachers in the knowledge and skills represented by the last two areas. Yet this is a goal toward which agencies and schools must work if they are to realize the optimum results from the amount of staff time and funds now being invested in staff development programs.

One aspect of leadership which has not previously been considered at any length is the dimension which has to do with the leader himself—his personality, relationships, ego needs, and capacity. We have spoken of these characteristics many times in relation to members of the group, but an assessment of them in the leader is equally important.

If some of the personal qualities of a group teacher-leader most essential to the achievement of educational goals were identified, three qualities, all closely related, would undoubtedly stand out. One is the ability to encourage and maintain a democratic process that respects the unique personality of each individual while it fosters cohesiveness and solidarity for the group as a whole.³⁴ The second essential is the capacity to accept others, including the inevitable hostility which is expressed in varying degrees in group relationships.³⁵ The third is the leader's management of himself in relation to his own needs and drives so that he does not seek gratification of them at the expense of the group.

The position of leader in an agency training group carries with it administrative and cultural status generally attributed to expertness in our society. The use the leader makes of these inherent attributes of his position will determine whether or not he succeeds in holding the respect and interest of the group. The hierarchical relationship between the leader of the training group and the members is inherent in the situation. But despite this, the leader can encourage interaction so as to help the group work out their problems of acceptance and growth in relation to the authority of the leader as well as to their peers.³⁶

A leader must fill many roles within the life of the group he is leading. He is a determiner of values, in what he says and thinks; he represents standards to those in the group. At times he is a shock-absorber for feelings expressed in the group; at others, he is the protector of the weak against the strong. In educational groups particularly, he sometimes serves as a demonstrator of the skills which group members are expected to perfect. This is especially true in groups established for the training of group leaders.

³⁴ Bernice Baxter and Rosalind Cassidy: *Group Experience—The Democratic Way*. New York: Harper, 1943. xvii, 218 pp. (p. 19–20).

³⁵ Grace L. Coyle: *Group Work with American Youth*. New York: Harper, 1948. viii, 270 pp. (p. 119).

³⁶ Alexander Wolf and Emanuel K. Schwartz, The Psychoanalysis of Groups—Implications for Education. *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, Vol. I, No. 2, Autumn 1955, pp. 9–17.

The skills represented in the leadership of training groups can be summarized under the three major headings: subject skills, educational skills, and group skills. These categories are admittedly artificial since all three areas converge on practically every point. The term "skills" as used here includes all aspects of group leadership. Although responsibility for all of the items included cannot rest with the group leader alone, the training consultant in an agency setting will have a definite relationship to all of the items listed in the various categories of skills.

Subject Skills

1. Determination of content areas to be taught, based on a clear understanding of educational and agency goals.
2. Professional competence in the subject areas to be taught as a basis for teaching others.
3. Creative and appropriate development of training content in relation to the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to be taught and to the developmental level of the learners.

Educational Skills

1. Effective use of the principles of educational diagnosis in determining educational needs.
2. Application of the principles of curriculum-making to the development of educational objectives in training groups.
3. Knowledge of basic educational principles in the learning process, including understanding of the psychodynamics of individual behavior as related to learning.
4. Skill in moving from the diagnosis of an educational problem to the determination of realistic goals and defining the steps in action leading to them.
5. Insuring the effective application of new learning in the regular on-the-job setting.

Group Skills

1. Understanding the principles involved in the formation of training groups; the relationship of selection of membership to the development and realization of educational goals.
2. Understanding and insight in the area of interpersonal relations and their import for group thinking and learning as a bridge to:

Creating a climate conducive to a relaxed and trusting feeling on the part of group members;

Helping members define a shared purpose in which each feels a responsible part and desire for accomplishment;

Providing for maximum individual and group development and being prepared effectively to utilize crises in growth as they emerge at all stages of the training process;³⁷

³⁷ Ronald Lippitt: *Training in Community Relations. A Research Exploration Toward New Group Skills*. New York: Harper, 1949. xiv, 286 pp. (Chapter 5).

Recognizing the influence of factors which are particularly characteristic of training groups in public welfare agencies, such as status problems created by staff combinations in groups, authority as an element in agency and group structure, etc.

3. Understanding the process of group deliberation and the elements which influence it, more particularly:

The basis on which membership was determined and the goals which were arrived at for the group;

Communication as a primary positive or negative force in group deliberation;

Existence of all the elements identified under interpersonal relations and their relationship to the conduct of the group's discussions;

Individual and group values as vital factors in how and what the group learns.

4. Knowledge in the effective and selective use of the various methods and techniques in group teaching.

Learning to Be an Effective Group Member

The idea that the group member himself has a responsibility toward the success and productivity of the group and that this too represents a skill to be learned must also be recognized. Our knowledge about individual behavior has made self-understanding possible and has usually resulted in better control of our impulses and greater capacity to work cooperatively with our fellowmen. This understanding of individual behavior is also basic to group life. In addition, we need to be aware of the unique phenomena which emerge by virtue of bringing individuals together in groups. Where the goals of the group are educational in nature, the productivity of the group and the benefits to individuals can be greatly enhanced if members are more knowledgeable about group behavior and its potentials for growth or disintegration.

Some people absorb this sensitivity and awareness about group participation and functioning through observation and imitation, and the leader plays a major role in this aspect of the group's education. Many people come away from a group experience with new insights into how to observe and conduct both themselves and group meetings more effectively.³⁸

More and more we are moving toward a formal identification of the attributes of mature group functioning and the underlying knowledge necessary to their acquisition. Harry Stack Sullivan's approach to this goal is made within the sociological frame of reference of "socialization" and "acculturation." Socialization, or the limitation of impulse, he defines as living with other people in ordered relationships; acculturation as consisting of the cultural regulators of interpersonal exchange.³⁹ In order to become group members in the fullest sense of the term, each person must learn the norms implied in "living with

³⁸ Semrad and Arsenian, p. 263. See footnote, p. 117.

³⁹ Harry Stack Sullivan's Suggestions Concerning the Place of Small Groups in Personality Development. *Autonomous Groups Bulletin*, Summer 1954, 9, p. 8.

other people in ordered relationships” or enough of them to make an area of shared experience possible.

Some fields, notably group dynamics, have approached the development of group awareness through the use by training groups of their own experiences together, as a basis for diagnostic study, evaluation, and efforts toward modifications of group functioning.⁴⁰ This is often accomplished through the use of a group observer or analyst who at intervals discusses with the group the quality and results of its interaction. When skillfully used, and the role of the observer requires training and experience, this device can be helpful in giving the group understanding of their deliberations. The use of the observer to interpret individual behavior in the group or to involve the group in an analysis of group interaction that in many instances stems from unconscious needs, can have destructive results for the individual and deter the group from accomplishing its task. In the group, as in individual learning, the nature of the self-awareness to be developed must be focused on the educational process and on the ways in which collective thinking can be enriched.

Within this framework, self-evaluation by a group is concerned with such matters as periodic assessment of the group's progress toward its goals and the ways in which methods or task responsibilities can be changed to expedite the group's deliberations; recognition of the responsibility of each member to participate within the rules of order of the democratic process and his professional code; and the exhibition of personal qualities which make for optimum positive interpersonal relations in the group.

As a way of strengthening group performance in training programs, agencies should assume some responsibility in helping staff to gain more understanding of what is involved in becoming productive group members. Each individual will need to understand himself better as a first step and this places part of the responsibility for such training back on individual supervision. Every professional worker has experienced the exhilaration which comes from a group session in which the leader and the participants performed at a high level of deliberation. These experiences are too rare. We need to give much more attention to what makes such sessions “tick” and undertake a more purposeful approach to teaching staffs how to become effective group members.

The following criteria for making groups more productive suggest a frame of reference for the education of staff in this area.⁴¹

Groups need to develop increased ability to:

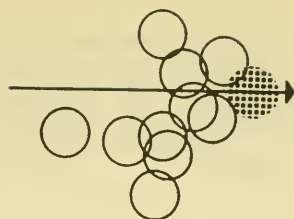
1. Exchange ideas among members freely and clearly, using language understood by everyone and with no fears of starting arguments or hurting feelings.
2. Examine objectively how well the group and its membership are working.
3. Share the leadership jobs among the members and become sensitive to the feelings of all.

⁴⁰ Lippitt. See footnote, p. 159.

⁴¹ David H. Jenkins and Alvin Zander: *Some Skills for Improving Group Dynamics. In Readings in Social Group Work.* Dorothea F. Sullivan, editor. New York: Association Press, 1952, xvi, 438 pp. (p. 156-159).

4. Accept new ideas and new members into the group without irreparable conflict, and to discipline itself to work toward long range objectives, and to profit from failures.
5. Think clearly about its own problems, finding causes and working through some solution.
6. Adjust its procedures and plans to meet the feelings and the desires of the members.

The responsibility for self, both as an individual and in a group, is the mark of a truly professional learner. The responsibility for teaching others, whether individually or in groups, demands professional stature both as a learner and a teacher.



NEW PERSPECTIVES IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

THE CENTRAL CONCERN of this publication is the introduction and exploration of a new dimension in educational activity, namely, the use of social science concepts to better understand group phenomena in learning. These two components—the educational base and the group setting—are examined within the particular framework of the public welfare agency.

Public welfare agencies are faced by certain conditions that increase the complexity of planning and administering the social services for which they are responsible. Among these are:

1. The size and complexity of public welfare programs throughout the country; the accompanying demands for personnel to staff these social services; and the serious shortages of adequately trained candidates for these positions pose serious problems for State and local agencies.
2. The large number of staff in social work positions in public welfare who do not have the professional social work education essential for their tasks and the increasing amount of specialized knowledge required in public welfare programs, place an unduly heavy educational responsibility upon the agency.
3. The question of what educational goals are appropriate to the agency and what ones are more specifically those of professional social work education entails a clear definition of social work positions in public welfare and delineation of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to fulfill the respective functions.
4. The question of how agencies can best undertake the tremendous task of preparing staff members at the various administrative levels for the social work responsibilities they carry is a constant one. In the broad sense, this question involves all aspects of staff development in the agency, primary among them being individual supervision and group training.

In order to prepare staffs adequately for the responsibilities they carry, those who plan and execute training programs must have knowledge in three specialized areas—the professional content of social work; educational principles and methods; group processes and functioning. Since the content to be taught is basic to performance in the two latter areas, conclusions drawn here will not deal with content independently.

The experiences of public welfare agencies showed that training staff had limited understanding and made little use of the latter two areas of knowledge. This publication calls attention to the availability of knowledge from allied fields which can be put to use in working on these educational problems.

Education

One of the most serious problems which came to light in this area was the fact that in planning staff training programs State public welfare agencies generally failed to assess the educational needs of their staffs and to develop educational goals and activities in harmony with such needs. This problem, of course, involves determination of the content to be taught, the educational principles and methods to be employed, and the criteria to be applied in forming educational groups.

Systematic determination of the educational needs of staff through use of the concept of educational diagnosis and employment of the principles of practice curriculum-making to develop educational objectives and content was a noticeable lack in training programs in State public welfare agencies. The application of criteria which could insure optimum educational results for these programs is often precluded by certain administrative realities. But often, too, agencies permitted these realities to retard sound educational planning through sheer lack of awareness of their significance or of how they could be used to influence favorably the achievement of educational goals.

Habit, administrative tradition, and expediency operated to too great an extent in the determination of training activities. The purposeful use of educational criteria as formulated in the concept of educational diagnosis was far less in evidence. In some groups the diagnostic application of sound educational and administrative principles could have influenced positively many of the traditional procedures which have more or less crystallized in some public welfare agencies. Where this was achieved, the educational results were rewarding.

Fragmentation of learning, so often reflected in the training activities described by agencies, was closely linked to the inadequate assessment of educational needs and the lack of development of appropriate educational experiences to meet them. Continuity and progression in learning, a major educational goal, seemed difficult to attain in many groups, and understandably so. The geographical spread of staff, daily pressures on the job, and the large numbers of supervisory staff without professional preparation for their responsibilities, not to mention the additional skills required to teach others, all contributed to this problem. The establishment of workable educational channels between individual and group educational experiences, purposefully planned and carried out, appeared to be needed in many instances.

Unquestionably the greatest difficulty experienced by training staffs in relation to the professional content to be taught lay in the discrepancy between demands of the public welfare job and the qualifications of those performing the job. Program content in public welfare has become increasingly technical with the advent of legislative provisions for disability and medical care programs, the mounting seriousness of aid-to-dependent children problems, the expanding special services in child welfare and the increasing emphasis on rehabilitation of the handicapped. A major educational problem arose out of the reality that not only were caseworkers largely uninformed in these important areas, but supervisors and others responsible for training them in many instances also lacked this knowledge and the skills essential in putting it to use.

The educational lag between what the vast majority of staff members are educationally qualified to do and the rapidly expanding concept of services to people poses a critical problem for public welfare agencies—one which must be studied and resolved insofar as possible. Its resolution rests on three major premises—increasing educational leave opportunities for staff to secure professional education; the development of job performance standards, including content and skills, in keeping with the stage of development of the agency and the qualifications of its staff; and building an agency staff development program that can prepare staff to meet such standards of performance adequately.

Supervisory or administrative personnel often revealed lacks in the very areas of knowledge and skill they were expected to teach. The largest number of group training activities reported were held as part of the regular staff meetings of agencies, rather than as separate institutes or workshops. Consequently they were led in most instances by the regular line supervisory or administrative staff. The advantages of integrating the training function with the day-by-day work of the agency through this method are apparent. What is not so apparent is the educational problem this poses in preparing supervisory and administrative staff to carry this responsibility.

Training activities designed to teach group leadership skills to such personnel often had to begin with teaching them content about attitudes, behavior, and relationships in casework practice before any approach to their teaching responsibility, individual or group, could be made.

In some instances, these lacks were so basic and of such long standing that the practice of requiring line staff, as a routine practice, to assume the group teaching function without some definite qualifications for and interest in the task is open to question.

The first line of defense in training public welfare staffs rests with local supervisors, local office heads, and county directors. With present shortages of professionally trained personnel in the social work field and the local resistance in some States to higher personnel standards, the general practice of placing available professionally qualified staff in strategic leadership positions is understandable. This use of qualified staff is applauded as sound; but, the experience of State agencies in most instances revealed a tremendous educational and

professional gap between top level staff in State positions and staffs at the operating level.

Even in the face of present difficulties, agencies should make a concerted effort to establish higher qualifications for staff employed at or promoted to local supervisory or administrative positions. They should, if possible, make greater investment at this level both in educational leave time and stipends for promising staff and in specialized staff development activities in these underdeveloped areas of performance.

Only a small proportion of the training activities reported on in the States was specifically geared to the teaching of supervisory and administrative knowledge and skills or to the training of these staffs in the important areas of educational methods and group leadership. This educational lag must be corrected if performance of staff at the direct service level is to be improved on any sustained basis.

Group Process and Leadership

The nature of the educational problems found in public welfare agencies forms the backdrop in this publication for the application of selected concepts about group functioning to the educational process. A horizontal and vertical relationship exists between the educational and group processes which requires that they be viewed as interrelated.

The educational experiences of State agencies were tested against three major concepts of group process—the formation of groups, their membership and goals; the influence of interpersonal relations on the group process; and the process of group deliberation in reaching group goals. In each of these areas, problems were identified which call for a planned approach to helping training staffs acquire the knowledge and skills essential to group leadership.

Foremost among the problems encountered in the educational use of the group process was the limited diagnostic thinking that public welfare agencies were putting into determining what and how training groups should be formed and for what educational purposes. Agencies were faced with many difficulties arising from the great diversity of staffs in educational background, training, experience, level of responsibility, and the type of agency organization. Such factors as these could not always be controlled in forming groups. But the fact that those in leadership roles often lacked knowledge of the significance of these factors in group functioning precluded skillful handling of the problems that resulted.

Perhaps the most persistent problem in State public welfare agencies in relation to the formation of groups came about by combining supervisors and their supervisees in training groups on casework practice, or including in the same group staff members from a number of levels of responsibility whose jobs encompassed multi-function tasks. The educational problems identified in

these instances were two-fold. First, staff were often combined in groups without the agency recognizing that how group membership was determined bore a significant relationship to the group's ability to achieve the educational objectives set up for it, and second, what the impact of such staff combinations was on the group process and ultimately on the learning process itself.

The assumption in the first type of situation seemed to be that unless supervisors attended training meetings with their supervisees, they would not be able to integrate what their caseworkers were taught in the group with their supervision of them on the job. This desire to build a continuous learning experience for staff is, of course, commendable, but there is great question as to whether this objective can actually be accomplished in this way. The individual must acquire knowledge in relation to his own use of it. For supervisors this means learning how to teach the content of the casework job. Mere attendance at training meetings for their staffs will not in itself assure this skill. Opportunities must be provided within their own groups for learning experiences especially directed toward their type of responsibility and educational need.

It is also questionable whether supervisory staff can learn the casework content and skills, which many of them still lack as a basis for teaching others, by attending meetings on casework with their caseworkers. Not only are there psychological hazards in such a joint learning situation, but educationally it cannot meet the desired objective. For supervisors, as well as caseworkers, the applied aspect of learning casework skills must be a part of their educational experience. This aspect of the learning of supervisors needs to be provided as part of a training program designed specifically to prepare them for their particular responsibilities.

These educational needs in the supervisory staffs were rarely planned for in the groups reported on and represent a major area for needed concentration in staff development planning in the future.

Groups made up of various levels of staff, some of whom carried administrative responsibility for others in the group or multi-function assignments, presented problems which seemed to interfere with learning. Even with the most positive of staff relationships in some of these groups, the factors of status and authority were inherent in and influenced group interaction in such a way as to affect the educational process. This problem was frequently complicated further by the fact that many of the senior personnel in these groups, who carried multi-function responsibilities, had to take on several learner roles during the course of the same training session.

Characteristically, training groups were formed without regard to the sociological factors influencing interpersonal relations and the group deliberative process. Since our understanding of groups is comparatively new, such a lack would be expected. Unfortunately the concept that groups must be formed in relation to well-defined objectives is not yet an inherent part of all our staff development thinking and planning.

In many of these groups, the geographical factor and size of staff prevented more homogeneous grouping. Even within these limitations, however,

when educational objectives are definitively developed, various methods can be used to counteract the heterogeneity caused by staff levels. In general, these approaches were not understood or utilized by those planning and leading groups.

The concept of group process dealing with the phenomena of interpersonal relations in the group represented a difficult area for leaders to understand and handle. The groups reported by State welfare agencies showed a variety of factors operating in such settings to influence the nature and quality of interpersonal relations in staff training groups.

The ways in which the membership in the group was arrived at unquestionably affected this aspect of the group process. Combining a variety of staff members introduced problems of official status with its attendant problems of authority which interfered in many instances with learning. The quality of interpersonal relations, and, in turn, the quality of group deliberation, bore a direct relationship to how the groups were formed and how clearly their educational objectives were set forth.

Knowledge and understanding of the psychodynamics of individual behavior is essential to knowledge and understanding of group behavior. Since many of the people teaching staff groups lacked this basic content even in relation to services to clients, understandably it was missing in their teaching and group leadership activities. Even where leaders were well grounded in understanding individual behavior, they experienced difficulty in acquiring a sense of the group as an entity in itself, aside from the individuals who made up its membership.

For all casework oriented staff who are expected to work with groups, this constitutes new learning. It involves the conscious application of specific principles and techniques in observing, interpreting, and guiding interpersonal relations in the group. In this area particularly, we need to draw on knowledge available to us from the social sciences. Certain group phenomena can be depended upon to appear, as for example, the rating or evaluation of members by other members and the impact of this on interpersonal relations within the group. The formation of subgroups is also usually characteristic of any group activity. How and why subgroups are formed and how they operate within the parent group results in a shift in the interpersonal relations of the group and can markedly affect group interaction. These and other phenomena were present in the agency training groups but were rarely recognized or understood by those leading groups. In view of our present stage of knowledge about educational groups, this limitation is to be expected. The important thing is that staff responsible for leading groups be given help in acquiring awareness and understanding of this and other concepts affecting group functioning.

The process of group deliberation with its emphasis on collective thinking, as contrasted with the individual teaching process in supervision, presented some problems in methodology for leaders. Group leaders were quite familiar with the lecture or the use of the discussion method in present-

ing material. Indeed the latter method was used almost exclusively in the groups reported, though familiarity with the method did not automatically result in its effective use. This was due in part to leaders' lack of knowledge about educational principles and in part to their lack of awareness as to the significance of group formation and interpersonal relations in the process of group deliberation.

The use of case material in group teaching highlighted the difficulties in group deliberation perhaps more than any one thing. Use of case material was universal in the group sessions. Furthermore, in all but a very few groups, the case material, or other practice material used for teaching, came directly from the experience of the group members themselves. Case material when selectively employed as a basis for conceptualization and generalization of knowledge proved to be a vitalizing and productive medium for learning. But, in too many situations, group teaching was focused on the specifics of a case rather than on the general principles to be drawn from it. This limited the general principles staffs could acquire as a basis for the transfer of their learning to other situations.

Where material from the practice of the members themselves was used for teaching in the group, certain educational problems arose. Although both leaders and members were enthusiastic about the use of their own material, often the records of meetings showed members as defensive, reluctant to criticize, concerned about evaluation of their practice by others, or actually attacking the practice of others. All this suggests that using teaching material from the practice of group members has limitations which call for a more differential use of such material. These limitations will, of course, be modified in proportion to the professional education, experience, and maturity of staff members and the security they derive from meeting together over a period of time.

The process of group deliberation in training groups actually involves a blend of educational concepts with those relating to group process. We have been able to do very little thus far in helping group teachers in either of these areas. Consequently many training groups go through the motions of group discussion, so to speak, but do not achieve the degree of productive learning of which the group is capable and which skilled educational leadership would assure.

Inherent in the concept of group deliberation are unique elements which in general were not familiar to group leaders. These were concerned primarily with how individuals think together, the problems of communication in this process, the emotional elements involved, and the influence of individual and group values on group deliberation. The educational skills required in conducting the discussion process, such as, keeping the discussion focused, pulling major points together periodically, helping the group to identify principles in the subject matter under discussion, etc., were somewhat more familiar to group leaders. But these were more apt to be intuitively applied than to be derived from knowledge and skill acquired through learning experiences of their own in relation to educational principles and methods. Leaders of training groups themselves expressed their need for help in these areas of group deliberation.

Public welfare agencies have grown a great deal in their recognition of the professional nature of the public welfare task and in their conviction about the necessity of providing staff with educational opportunities to become competent and skillful. Much has been accomplished in the establishment of sound staff development programs and provisions for educational leave and stipends. Because of the size and nature of the public welfare responsibility in this country, the task still looms as an overwhelming one in many ways. But even though this is true, it is a much more hopeful and encompassable one than at any time in the past.

The records submitted by the agencies show clearly that those responsible for the training of staffs are acutely aware of their need for professional help in becoming better teachers and group leaders. If this help is to be provided a systematic approach to the content and skills needed in these special areas is a prime essential and organized provisions for the training of those who train others should be undertaken. This publication offers a beginning in this direction. But further improvement and refinement of the teaching and learning processes in groups can be arrived at only under laboratory conditions where the educational and group concepts developed here can be further tested.

STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE ON USE OF THE GROUP METHOD IN THE TRAINING OF PUBLIC WELFARE STAFFS

(Data to be acquired as the basis for Doctoral Dissertation at School of
Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University)

This questionnaire has been developed as one of the basic sources of data to be used in a study of the group process in the training of public welfare staffs. It is being sent to a group of training personnel in State programs in the hope that they will be interested in participating in the examination of this area of staff development. The questionnaire may seem to demand a great deal both in amount of time and the sharing of experiences. The writer can only hope that participation in this analysis will have some compensations for the participants in terms of an approach which might be useful in their own jobs and that the study itself will be of some use to the field at a later date.

Throughout the years that staff development has been emerging as an agency function, the use of the group method in the training of staffs has been an actuality. Our primary focus in the development of staff, however, has been on individual supervision as the core of the educational process and it is only in recent years that we have given consideration to the group method as one which requires a body of knowledge and skills equivalent to that acknowledged to be essential in the practice of individual supervision. Impetus has been given to our examination of the group process in training through the accelerated and extensive interest in group life throughout our society. This interest has produced a wide range of research about groups from many fields—sociology, social psychology, social anthropology and others—and this in turn has influenced the theory and practice of social work, more notably the field of social group work. Social group work today has a formulated body of theory, rooted in its own philosophy and practice and enriched by the contributions from the research of allied fields, a body of knowledge which offers a rich resource to agencies and schools in acquiring an understanding of the group process in training and education. This study is concerned with ways in which this knowledge can be put to use in the training of agency staffs.

The data for this study must be secured from training personnel in the field if the assessment of problems is to have any validity. We are therefore seeking the participation of training consultants and supervisors in a questionnaire dealing with the problems encountered in staff training groups as they relate to the use of group process concepts in learning and teaching.

In your capacity as a training supervisor or consultant actively engaged in leading or working with staff groups in training, will you give us the benefit of your thinking and experience on the questions raised in this survey? If there are other members of your staff who are carrying responsibility for groups of staff in the training program, as for example in a training unit, would it be possible for them to participate in this study also?

One of our real problems in attempting to study the group process in the training field is our unfamiliarity with what to look for and the consequent shortage of recorded material which would permit study of the group process. We are accustomed to recording group activity from the point of view of what was covered and what was accomplished in the group—the minutes of the meeting—but we are just beginning to be aware of the group process itself and to understand its influence on learning. In applying the questions in Part II of this survey, will you try to report the group situation as realistically as you can and give actual examples of your points wherever you can. If discussion of these questions in a different order would better reflect what went on in the group, please feel free to shift them.

The study has two parts. Part I requests factual data on a chart and a general statement of problems. Part II asks for the application of specific questions about group process to a training group.

PART I

Part I deals with a summarization of group training activities planned and conducted in your State training program during the period of *December 1, 1954 to December 1, 1955*. Will you please fill in the data asked for in the attached chart for *each group training activity*? Please consult the attached explanatory guide before filling in the data.

On a separate sheet will you please indicate the primary problems you meet in relation to the group aspects of the training program?

GUIDE FOR FILLING OUT QUESTIONNAIRE (CHART) ON TRAINING GROUPS

For the purposes of this study, an agency is defined as a State Department of Public Welfare, including its constituent county programs.

(1) *Training groups*: Staff groups from any part or level of the agency's program which are planned and conducted as a part of the State's training program.

(2) *Period to be covered*: A year's period was selected in order to secure a representative range of type and number of groups. If some groups have not completed their sessions by December 1, 1955, please indicate date of ending even though it may be subsequent to this deadline.

(3) *Type of training activity*:

Code: I—institute; W—workshop; TC—training center; PSM—professional staff meeting; O—other (please specify)

Definitions:

Institute—Group where major responsibility is with the leader for development of material and teaching the group, although it may be done through discussion and group participation.

Workshop—A working group in which there is active participation by members in advance planning and preparation of materials and continued responsibility throughout for joint work on the problems under discussion. Leader helps group arrive at stated purposes, but leadership is shared with the group and the members learn from each other.

TRAINING GROUPS HELD IN YOUR AGENCY DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS' PERIOD

December 1, 1954 to December 1, 1955

(See attached guide for explanation of items)

Type of training activity	Why was this training group organized? Give specific purpose and subject area content	Number sessions and within what period of time	Membership			Education			Length of time in the agency			Geographical location of job		Was attendance required?		Who led group?		
			Total number in group	Sex	Position in agency	Number with full graduate training	Number with partial graduate training	Number with no graduate training	Coll. gr.	Less	Under 1 yr.	1-10 yrs.	Over 10 yrs.	Urban	Rural	Yes	No	Train. Sup.
I																		Outside Leader
W																		Other Ag. Person
TC																		
PSM																		
O																		

Training Center—A unit established for a projected period of time for the purpose of conducting training of specific groups of staff, as for example, orientation units for new staff, units for training of new supervisors, etc.

Professional Staff Meetings—Staff meetings planned to deal with specific subject areas of staff development program, with content and objectives geared toward educational goals. Administrative informational staff meetings should be omitted.

(4) *Why was group organized?* Give reason for formation and objectives set for the series and a brief statement of content.

(5) *Number of sessions of group and within what period of time:* Give total number of times each group met and indicate time span during which meetings were held, as for example, a two hour meeting once a week for four weeks, two sessions a day for five days, etc.

(6) *Membership:*

Total number in group—Total number of people in attendance.

Sex—Indicate number of men and number of women.

Position in agency—Give number in each of various positions of caseworker, supervisor, administrator, field representative, or in other staff positions (please specify). If any members present represented an administrative level outside the immediate agency, such as a State or Federal staff, please indicate this.

(7) *Education:* Indicate number of group members who fell in each of the categories under this heading on the chart.

(8) *Length of time with agency*—This is to give some idea of the experience represented in the group. Estimates are acceptable here if exact number of years is not known. Indicate number of staff members under each item.

(9) *Geographical location on the job*—This refers to where the individual members are located geographically on their jobs. Definitions of what is urban and what is rural vary, but the objective here is to see the differences represented in problems and outlook in various types of areas. Your own judgment on the distinction will be more valid here than any formal definition.

(10) *Was attendance required?*—Was the training group set up for certain staff members and with the specific requirement that they attend, or was attendance voluntary?

(11) *Who led the group?*—Specify the leader by agency title and indicate his administrative relationship, if any, to the members of the group; for example, was he the supervisor of any of the individuals in the group, was he a leader from another part of the agency, or was he a leader from outside?

PART II

This part of the questionnaire deals specifically with problems related to the group process in training groups. These can be seen more clearly when they are observed in relation to a specific group. It would therefore be extremely helpful if you could apply the questions outlined below to a group which you will be leading. Will you please select for this purpose a group which is scheduled to meet as a part of your training program during the period of December 12, 1955 to January 20, 1956, and will you apply the questions to *two consecutive* sessions of the group, reporting on each session separately? The questions are arranged in three sections: those which apply to the group in general, those which are more pertinent to the first session and those which are more pertinent to the second session. If the

two sessions you select are not the first two of the series of meetings, please indicate where in the series the two sessions fall.

In the event that you have no training groups scheduled for the period designated, will you please select a group for analysis which you have led previously, but please select one as recent in time as possible. Please give the dates of such meetings.

I. Questions Concerning the General Structure of the Group

1. Please give the following data about the group as a whole:
 - a. What type of training activity—institute, workshop, etc.
 - b. What were the membership characteristics—number, sex, position, education, experience.
2. Why was the group organized and what were its objectives? What problems did you meet in determining who should attend, what the training needs of the group were, what content should be planned and how many sessions the group should have? What administrative levels of staff were represented in the group?
3. How did you decide who should lead the group? As the leader, what was your administrative relationship, if any, to any members of the group?
4. In what ways did the group members participate in planning the meetings and developing study material in advance? In what ways did this participation, or absence of it, seem to affect the response and morale of the group?
5. How many sessions were scheduled for this group, over how long a period of time?
6. Were there administrative factors which favorably or unfavorably influenced the formation and purposes of this group, as for example, administrative structure and philosophy, lines of authority, policy making function, personnel practices, etc., and how do you think these factors affected the training goals and the group's functioning?
7. Did any outside factors such as physical setting of the group, job pressures on individuals, or long distance travel to the meeting affect the morale and functioning of the group? How?

II. Questions relating to the group process in session I

1. Was this group used to meeting together or were the members meeting one another for the first time? If the latter, did this delay the emergence of a group feeling? What, if anything, did you do to facilitate this process?
2. What evidences were there of diversity or homogeneity in the group's membership? in their ideas and attitudes? Did these influence the group's course and how?
3. Were there differences in attitude on the part of the individuals toward attending the group sessions? If so, what do you think these were attributable to and what positive or negative effects were evident in the group? Was there a choice about attendance and did this affect attitudes or behavior in any way?
4. What do you think influenced the amount and quality of group participation? Did any sub-groups or cliques exist or form in the group and how did this affect discussion? Were there reactions, positive or negative, on the part of individuals or the group as a whole which you think were related to authority or prestige of any group member or the leader? Did these reactions enhance or threaten effective group functioning and how did you deal with the situation?

5. Could you identify in the group, members who were noticeably passive? dependent or dominated members? fringe members not actively engaged in the group? members who dominated the group? members who competed with the leader? members who became indigeneous leaders? members who facilitated the discussion? etc. How do you think these individual patterns affected group process and individual learning?
6. What method did you use in conducting the session, for example, lecture, discussion, presentations by members, socio-drama, etc. and what determined your choice? What results did you see from each in terms of the degree of success in teaching and learning? In the effect on group participation? Did members use their own case material or other recorded material from their own experience as the basis for discussion? How did this work out?
7. What kinds of issues produced conflicts in the group? How were they resolved?
8. What do you think the group's attitude was toward you as the leader? Were there instances of resistance in the group to the ideas or authority you represented to them? Did they accept you as a person who could help them with their problems?

III. Questions relating to the group process in session II

1. How did you relate the content of these sessions to the individual supervision of the group members on their jobs? Was it possible to isolate lacks in knowledge and skill on the part of individuals in the group and was any individual help given on these problems outside the group. If so, by whom and how?
2. Please answer Question 6, Session I, in relation to this session also.
3. Did you notice any changes in the second session in any of the areas covered by the questions listed for Session I? Will you describe them and indicate what you think brought them about? This is a particularly important question and should be illustrated with examples wherever possible.

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